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Latino Children of Immigrants:
Identity Formation at the Intersection of Residency Status

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Latino Children of Immigrants:
Identity Formation at the Intersection of Residency Status

by

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Dedication

A mi madre, Victoria Ruiz, por su fortaleza, valentía y amor incondicional

A Diego y Valentina por su luz en mi vida

A Rogelio, mi compañero, por su apoyo

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Latino Children of Immigrants:
Identity Formation at the Intersection of Residency Status

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This qualitative study addresses the interrelation of residency status, ethnic identity formation and schooling among young children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America in mixed legal status families in Central Texas. Through critical case studies, the researcher worked with Latino children of immigrants and undocumented immigrant mothers. The dissertation examines the following question: What is the interconnection between immigration experiences, residency status, and ethnic identity for children in mixed status families from Mexico and Central America?

Informed by identity formation theories, Critical Race Theory, LatCrit theory and Chicana Feminist epistemology, this study shows how undocumented immigrant mothers support the development of an ethnic identity development in their children. A reason to work towards understanding identity formation among children of Latino ancestry is to open a space where their unique experiences are valued just as much as those of mainstream students. Latinos in the United States are not a homogenous group; we have

diverse social, cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds. Schools and communities have inadvertently overlooked Latino children of immigrants by classifying them with the 1.5 and 2nd generation Mexican American students, but this classification does not acknowledge their unique needs and their particular familial experiences. This study also brings to light the experiences of undocumented immigrant mothers as important to the analysis of the phenomenon of immigration itself. This project is relevant to the growing field of immigration studies, education, educational administration, and anthropology of education, among other fields because it concentrated on young children ages 7-10, what the researcher considered an under researched population.

The intention of this research is to disrupt monovocal, discriminatory discourses about Latino immigrants. Preliminary findings suggest the need to reframe Latino children of immigrants as individuals with rich, complex lives composed of different elements such as legal status, English/Spanish languages, immigration experiences/traumas, cultural traditions, and family composition. We need to work at the intersections of these different dimensions of identity and experience as well as to consider how each aspect is relevant for the education of children of immigrants of Latino descent.

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I. INTRODUCTION

As a bilingual educator in a Central Texas urban school district, I have had the opportunity to work with immigrant families and children from Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras and other Central America countries. My daily interaction with kindergarteners in a bilingual classroom allowed me to see snapshots of their private lives such as going to *La Pulga* (Flea Market) during the weekend, attending *misa* (Catholic mass) on Sundays, or learning about their extended family. Young children were eager most of the time to share in class about their lives. I still remember telling my students to only raise their hands if their answers were related to the *cuento* we were reading, such as character, plot or setting. In the curriculum-driven hassle, I did not allow my students the space to share family stories, their ways of being and ways of making sense of their lives that were fundamental to who they were.

As a Mexican national, I shared many cultural markers with my students and their families. However, in retrospect, I did not fully value their contributions to our classroom, to our learning and to our community of learners. Instead, I mainly concentrated on the curriculum and privileged the master discourse over the knowledges and experiences of my students. Immigrant students possess multiple frames of reference, and it is paramount that we understand and validate their dual experiences (Sánchez, 2007, 2001; Bejarano, 2005; Falicov, 2002; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999; Sánchez and Kasun, 2012; Machado-Casas, 2009). Falicov (2002) describes as cultural bifocality the cultural experiences individuals acquire from the two cultures to which they belong. Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (1995b) have termed

"immigrant's dual frame of reference" immigrants' constant comparing and contrasting of their previous experiences and expectations in their countries of origin and their new experiences in the host society. Through their oftentimes unheard stories, my young students attempted to make evident their cultural flexibility and fluidity to engage in different worlds (Sánchez, 2007). Thus, it is relevant for immigrant students' schooling that we analyze the relationship that such previous and/or home experiences have on their identity formation and agency.

There is extensive reference in the literature to people's ability to manage and make sense of more than one physical and emotional space. Scholars have referred to dual worlds (Bejarano, 2005), duality (Freire, 2006), straddling cultures (Anzaldúa, 1999), dual consciousness (Du Bois, 1994), dual visions (Falicov, 2002), multiple consciousness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), two-ness (Du Bois, 1994), cultural bifocality (Falicov, 2002), dual frame of reference (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001,1995b), two identities (Ogbu, 1990), cultural flexibility (Sánchez, 2007), transnationalism (Sánchez, 2007; Sánchez and Kasun, 2012; Machado-Casas, 2009) bicultural and bilingualism. These exemplify individuals' attempts to find their place in terms of identity and sociohistorical belonging. My study seeks to examine Mexican and Central American immigrant[1] children's opportunities to (re)create their ethnic identity amid oppressive institutional and social forces, in relation to (un)documented immigrant status. I will address this issue by examining the ways in which parents promote home

[1] Fully aware that the ethos of reception –the general social and cultural climate immigrants encounter– vary significantly by Latino immigrant group (Suárez–Orozco & Suárez–Orozco, 2001; Portes, & Rumbaut, 2001), I will use Mexican and Central American immigrants or Latino immigrants interchangeably throughout this study.

traditions, celebrations, *creencias* (beliefs) and ways of knowing of the home that allows children to learn about their heritage country.

The literature shows (Gonzales, 2009; Perez, 2009; Rincón, 2008; Bejarano, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; Olsen, 1997) that issues of legal status are very relevant for students in high school and college. For many of these youth, their lives are literally shattered for lack of legal status, authorization to work, to drive, or to go to college. Legal status is an issue of concern that is only discussed in confidence. As a bilingual teacher, many times I witnessed a proud smile from my students when sharing that they were born *here*. In their innocence, my kindergarteners would share about their family's legal status with comments such as "my older brother was born in Mexico but he can't go visit" or "my mom can't work because she doesn't have papers." I explore the perceptions and understanding that Latino young children's in mixed status families have about legal status, migrating, heritage country and the impact these constructs have on their identity development and schooling in the US. My study explored the influence undocumented immigrant mothers have on the ethnic identity development on their children. Finally, I also explore the effect that migrating experiences have on the agency development of undocumented immigrant mothers living in the US. The thesis asks the following broad question, followed by a set of sub-questions (described in Research Questions section):

What is the interconnection between immigration experiences, residency status, and ethnic identity for children in mixed status families from Mexico and Central America?

In this introductory chapter, I start by defining key terms relevant to this project. I then provide a rationale and explore the theoretical framework and previous research on

the topic. I will then explain the methods utilized in this study, the findings from my work with Latino children of immigrants and with undocumented immigrant mothers. Lastly, I address the contributions of my study to the research field and recommendation for further research as well as recommendations for the education of Latino children of immigrants in the United States.

Key Terms

Below, I provide definitions for important terms that will be utilized in this study: immigrant, unauthorized immigrants/workers, undocumented students/families, mixed status, identity, negotiation, and figured worlds.

Immigrant – Immigrant refers to a person who emigrates from one country to permanently settle in another country. The term migrant[2] is not suitable to the population addressed in this study because 1) immigrants' presence is more permanent in the U.S. due to stringent immigration laws and policies, 2) they emigrated on their own to look for jobs, 3) many may lack work authorization.

Unauthorized immigrants/workers – The U.S. Homeland Security Department labels undocumented people as "illegal aliens." According to the American Heritage Dictionary (2000), "alien" also refers to "outsider" understood as "a person who is not included in a group" or as "strange," defined as "different from the norm." When referring to people,

[2] Between 1942-1964 Mexico exported an estimated 45,000 males to the United States through a contract labor program commonly known as the "Bracero Program." "Bracero" comes from "brazo" (arm) signifying manual labor in this context. Contracts lasted from six to eighteen months and men were immediately returned to Mexico upon termination of their contract (Gonzalez, 2006). Due to the itinerant and temporary nature of the jobs, these individuals were known as migrant workers. Some call this modality a modern form of indentured labor because the workers are placed under employer as well as state control (Gonzalez, 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2002).

in my view, the term "alien" carries a pejorative and dehumanizing connotation. People that come from foreign countries to work in the U.S. are by definition workers. Some of these workers do not receive authorization to work. Nevertheless, these workers perform jobs. I chose to use the adjective "unauthorized" because these foreign nationals are workers without authorization to work in the U.S.

Undocumented students/families – In the case of students and families, I see it as more appropriate to use the term "undocumented" because they are students or families without proper documentation to reside in the U.S. There is no such thing as an authorization to be a family or a student. Membership to a family is not granted by any government, unless we refer to the contract of marriage. In the case of children, the law authorizes undocumented students in kindergarten to 12th grade to receive a free, public education (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982). Therefore the term "unauthorized" does not properly describe students and families without legal residency status.

Mixed status – The official categories to apply for residency are numerous: temporary visas, work visas, student visas, legalized aliens, principal aliens, asylees, refugees, business nonimmigrants, migrants, parolees (Bejarano, 2005; Fix & Zimmerman, 2001). For purposes of this project, mixed status refers to the situation where some members of the same family are U.S. citizens, some have permanent resident status, some are in the process of legalizing their status, and some others are undocumented.

Identity – According to Holland et al. (1998), identity is understood as a socially constructed notion of self "through the mediation of powerful discourses and their artifacts" such as language, curriculum vitae and the like (*ibid.* p. 26). Identity is also defined as self-understandings (Holland et al., 1998) and how people are viewed or

identified by others. Identities are unfinished and in process, but hold some degree of durability as individuals are not new every time they relate to others. Identities are produced in figured worlds.

Negotiation **–** The notion of negotiation is used to understand the process by which individuals (re)construct their understanding of themselves as they participate in figured worlds, such as school, home, with friends or other environments (Holland et al., 1998).

Figured Worlds **–** Figured worlds are culturally constructed sites where people (re)enact their identities by engaging in activities that impart meaning to such spaces. Figured worlds, according to Holland et al. (1998), are imagined communities that operate dialectically and dialogically in "as if" worlds. For figured worlds to exist there needs to be a collective agreement regarding the interpretation of words and actions that will constitute such a site.

Overview of the Study

This qualitative study addresses the interrelation of residency status, ethnic identity formation and schooling among elementary age, children of immigrant from Mexico and Central America with mixed legal status families in an urban Central Texas school district. A Critical Race methodology and research in the area of immigration with adolescents and young children was used. To explore identity formation issues among student participants, I employ a body of literature focused on theories of self and identity and figured worlds (della Porta & Viani, 2006; Holland et al., 1998). To understand the particular lived experiences of this group, and how these affect their schooling, I base my understandings on the current body of literature on immigration studies (Gonzales, 2009;

Perez, 2009; Rincón, 2008; Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008, 2002; Bejarano 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2002; Falicov, 2002; Menjívar, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999; Olsen, 1997; Igoa, 1995; Padilla & Durán,1995).

The theoretical frameworks that in my view are better suited to explore issues related to Mexican and Central American immigrants are identity development theory (Holland, et al., 1998; Urrieta, 2011, 2007, 2003; della Porta & Viani, 2006), Critical Race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano, 2001, 1998; Matsuda, 1989, 199; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2005), LatCrit theory (Solórzano, & Yosso, 2001; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001), and Chicana Feminist epistemology (Delgado Bernal, 1998). I chose to situate my study in the critical paradigm (Martens, 2005) because this paradigm takes into consideration the historical background in order to understand current oppressive situations of a given issue. Critical epistemology addresses multiple realities which align with multiple stories about immigration because it is not accurate to have only one encompassing truth about Mexican and Central American immigrants. I argue, however, that it is important to bring to center aspects and studies related to Mexican and Central American immigrants as these studies broaden our knowledge in the area.

In order to answer my study's overarching question, I will draw from several sources of data. With the goal of not being overtly invasive, the methods that will be employed in this study were carefully selected keeping in mind the participants' age (7-10 years old) and the sensitivity of some of the topics to be addressed, such as legal status, family, migrating and country of origin. These methods included: 1) multimodal

techniques such as collecting data through narrative and visual media; 3) group discussions and individual interviews with students as follow-up to multimodal techniques; 4) one-to-one oral history interviews with parents; and journal writing with parents. Informed by a Critical Race methodology (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, 2001; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001), the methods listed above were intended to use my participants' experiential knowledge, at the intersection of other forms of subordination, as legitimate and central to understanding what this project set out to accomplish.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this project is to study the relationship between migration, (un)documented status and ethnic identity formation amongst immigrant children from Mexican and Central American descent in mixed status families. This focus is important because identity development is a powerful factor for cognitive learning, and the understanding of this relationship can lead to a better educational experience for children of immigrants. Previous studies (Gonzales, 2009; Perez, 2009; Rincón, 2008; Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008, 2002; Bejarano, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; Olsen, 1997; Igoa, 1995) have shed light on the relationship between migration and its implication in the education of immigrant adolescents. Through these findings we have learned that immigrant teenagers tend to isolate themselves from mainstream students because of their lack of command of English (Bejarano, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; Olsen, 1997); that they shed their native languages relatively quickly and become English "seekers" (Valenzuela, 1999; Olsen, 1997); and that their learning is more meaningful when their cultural experiences are validated in school (Igoa, 1995).

The aforementioned studies have been conducted with immigrant adolescents and young adults, who, because of their age and their awareness of theirs and their family's migratory status are better able to externalize their ideas. My project set out to explore perceptions and understandings about migration and immigration issues that young children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America have, something that had not been explored before. My project is relevant to the growing field of immigration studies, education, educational administration, and anthropology of education, among other fields because I primarily concentrated on young children ages 7-10, what I consider an under researched population. The findings from my study seek to enrich existing research regarding the experiences of immigrants and children of immigrants of Mexican and Central America origin in U.S. schools by describing their lived stories and their identity formation.

Research Questions

This qualitative study focused on immigrant students' of Mexican and Central American descent between the ages of 7 and 10 years of age, and immigrant mothers, in a Central Texas elementary school. My aim is to shed light on the identity formation particular to Latino children of immigrants as these manage a cultural bifocality, cultural fluidity and dual frame of reference at the intersection of residency status and schooling. I also focused on the ways undocumented immigrant mothers help children support and/or suppress an ethnic identity while parenting and educating in the U.S. My focus on immigrant families from Mexico and Central America with mixed residency status was guided by the overarching research question:

How do undocumented mothers and children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America construct self-understandings in relation to their ethnic identity and immigration experiences in mixed-legal status families?

The study sub-questions are:

1. How do children in mixed status immigrant families negotiate the tensions that migration and (un)documented status can engender?

2. How do undocumented mothers' immigration experiences influence children's self identification and the development of an ethnic identity?

3. How do immigration experiences foster agency among undocumented mothers from Mexico and Central America?

Significance of the Study

Young immigrant children and immigrant mothers in general are often overlooked in the arena of immigration studies. Even research in the area of early childhood fails to address the experiences of Latino children of immigrants. Since there is little research about Latino young children of immigrants and undocumented immigrant mothers, my argument is that it is relevant to include the experiences and perceptions of this population of Mexican and Central America ancestry. By centering the experiences and perceptions of Latino immigrant families, this study highlights the need to address the experiences of their children of immigrants and undocumented immigrant mothers.

Another reason to work towards understanding identity formation among children of Latino ancestry is to open an educational space where their unique experiences are valued just as much as those of mainstream students. Latinos in the United States are not a homogenous group; we have diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Garcia & Jensen, 2009). We have different racial origins and come from a range of countries. In

my view, schools have inadvertently overlooked young Latino children of immigrants by classifying them with the 1.5 and 2nd generation[3] Mexican American students, but this classification does not acknowledge their unique needs and their particular familial experiences. Factors heavily implicated in the failure of Mexican immigrants' schooling are class and ideological structures (Vásquez, et al. 1994). Schools reinforce and reward those who possess the cultural capital that favors the status quo (Yosso, 2005). Focusing on the experiences of children of immigrants and on how they develop an ethnic identity, as these relate to a cultural bifocality (Falicov, 2002) and cultural flexibility (Sánchez, 2007), disrupts the dominant discourse of a monolithic culture by presenting alternative views of the world. Latino immigrant students' experiences and funds of knowledge (Sánchez, 2007, 2001; Moll et al., 1992; Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992) remain almost entirely invisible in U.S. schools and educational policy discourse, when in fact it could be an instructional tool. Latino immigrant students, as minority, are sometimes made to feel culturally inferior or deficient because their ethnic ways of knowing are unparallel to those of the dominant culture (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Sánchez, 2007). Incorporating stories of Mexican and Central American children of immigrants and their families will not only demystify assumptions about their motivations to immigrate to the United States for educators, but the students will also validate[4] and learn about their cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). Immigration and immigrant labor has a male face. Immigrant women in general in the US society are "relatively invisible as a recognizable group" (Pearce, et al.,

[3] As defined by Harker (2001), 2nd generation of immigrants refers to U.S.-born children of immigrants. The 1.5 generation of immigrants refers to foreign-born children of immigrants that migrated to the United States while very young.

[4] In her personal account as a transnational Mexicana, Sánchez (2001) explains how transmigrants purposefully hide their lives and experiences for their own protection and survival. Sánchez would not share with anyone at school about her "vacation" trips to Mexico because she had learned (culturally and socially) to see this practice as a step back.

2011) and represent an under researched group of the immigrant population. However, immigrant mothers and wives play a critical role in the adaptation of the modern immigrant family in the US. Thus, it is important that we analyze how their contributions and ways of knowing impact the identity development process of young children of immigrants.

Summary and Chapters Outline

Clearly, there is a need to understand the experiences of young children of immigrants of Mexican and Central American origin in our schools. Describing these experiences and the relationship with identity formation may further elucidate this phenomenon for educators as they attempt to better meet the needs of their students. Educationally, ignoring immigrant students' ethnic identity affects their academic progress because of the lack of support and understanding of their perceptions and preoccupations. Studying the ways in which immigrant families support or suppress their children's ethnic identity development and the ways in which students externalize this identity can shed light on their schooling experiences as well as the way the educational system responds to them. Finally, the growing body of literature on immigration studies and early childhood studies stand to benefit from discussing the issues of young children of immigrants by focusing on a population that is seldom acknowledged.

In Chapter II, I review the theoretical frameworks that guide this project: sociocultural identity development theory, Critical Race theory, LatCrit theory and Chicana Feminist epistemology. I begin this chapter by presenting a brief historical overview of the education of Mexican-origin population in the U.S. as background to the

Texas city in which this study was conducted. I provide a brief description of some of the major legal struggles for educational equality of Mexican Americans. I also discuss major sociopolitical struggles Central Americans have endured and how these have affected their decisions to migrate to other places, including the U.S. Finally, I review the literature related to immigration studies, including gendered migration, by explaining relevant tenets such as English language, legal status and network support for immigrants in school, in communities and with peers.

In Chapter III, I present the different methods I used to collect and analyze data for this qualitative study (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). This chapter begins with a general overview of the study, including my assumptions and understandings based on the literature review on immigrants, identity formation and figured worlds. Given the age of my young participants (7-10), I deemed important to learn more on perspectives about researching with children. Thus, I am including a section regarding socialization models and sociological conceptions of children, and my standing on these tenets. Also included are a description of the study participants and the setting for the study. Data collected for this study include: focus groups and individual interviews with children that included drawing, narratives and quick notes; and one-to-one oral history interviews with parents and journaling. Chapter IV, Conversations with children of immigrants, presents the lived experience of children of immigrants as these related to immigration, language and ethnic heritage. This chapter details my research work with eight young children of immigrants, ages 7-10. The three major themes that emerged from my meetings with children are: immigrant cultural capital (immigration knowledge), linguistic capital (language use and boundaries), and resistant capital (ethnic

heritage and pride). This chapter includes narratives from my young participants, some of their drawings and the analysis of the findings of my work with children. Chapter V includes the narrative counterstories of five undocumented immigrant mothers from Mexico and Central America. In general, immigrant mothers' voices are seldom heard. Focusing on immigrant women also helps us elucidate understandings about the phenomenon of immigration itself. The data is presented in narrative format in Spanish with an English translation. I reconstructed the participants' narratives to present a chronological order of events, and I tried to capture their unique expressive styles and individual voices in Spanish to transmit their lived experiences.

Chapter VI presents the findings identified after individual interviews with each adult participant. Findings from my research with undocumented immigrant mothers speak of agentic beings that are innovative, creative and determined. Using Yosso's community cultural wealth theory (2005), I explain the six forms of cultural wealth as they manifested in my participants' experience: resistant, linguistic, navigational, social, familial and aspirational capital. I also present my contribution to the filed by explaining Immigrant Cultural Wealth or *Riquieza Cultural del Inmigrante*. *Riquieza* (wealth in Spanish) emphasizes the notion of the richness of knowledge immigrants poses in different areas such as immigration law and survival skills. I explain immigrant cultural wealth and why it is relevant for this new cultural capital to be taken in consideration when researching immigrant communities. Chapter VII provides a general conclusion to the study, implications for schools, educators and the educational field as well as recommendations for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

It is impossible to enter a conversation about immigrants of Mexican and Central American descent in the U.S. without reflecting on the historical past of Mexican Americans that this country has witnessed. I begin this chapter with a brief historical overview of the education of the Mexican-origin population in the U.S. and discuss how they have been underserved since the United States appropriated Mexican territory in 1848. Although my study seeks to study children and families with Mexican and Central American histories, the presence of Mexican ancestry groups has been stronger and longer in this country. I also provide a brief description of some of the major legal Mexican American struggles for educational equity and how this group has overcome institutionalized obstacles in schooling. The sociopolitical struggles in Central America are also reviewed as background for analyzing and understanding the motives for the immigration decisions of people from this region.

Next, I utilize immigration studies as a lens to explain some of the important tenets commonly associated with immigrants such as border crossing, language, race, phenotype, legal status and community support, which, in my view, shape in great manner their lived experiences. I also delve into existing identity formation theories (della Porta & Viani, 2006; Holland et al., 1998; Urrieta, 2011, 2007, 2003; Gee, 2001) and figured worlds as a backdrop for understanding identity and identity formation in this study. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of my theoretical framework,

where I draw upon Critical Race theory, LatCrit theory (specifically community cultural wealth) and Chicana Feminist epistemology.

Historical Overview of the Education of Mexican-origin Population in the U.S

It is relevant for my study to analyze the educational history of Mexican Americans in the United States because this account will assist in understanding society's current sentiment and treatment of Mexican- and Central American-origin people in this country and in particular in Texas. García (2001) indicates that images about ethnic groups are significant predictors of support for racial integration and desired social distance. For instance, English colonizers saw Native Americans as "uncivilized savages" and "pagans" turning cultural differences into racial differences, thus enacting laws and educational programs to civilize them (Spring, 2010, original emphasis, pp. 2-4). This self-proclaimed sense of cultural and racial superiority allowed Europeans to justify taking over Native American and Mexican lands; the slavery, lynching or beating of African Americans in the South; or the exclusion and segregation of Asians and Mexican Americans to fully participate in public education (Spring, 2010).

During the Mexican American War (1846-1848), the United States acquired by conquest a vast territory in the Southwest; a war that was brought to an end with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. For some (Spring, 2010; De León, 1998), this was a race war as Mexican *mestizos* were considered a sub-standard racial mixture because they

descended from an inferior European race[5] and Native Americans. For others (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998), the treaty marked the beginning of persistent, pervasive prejudice, discrimination and exclusion of people of Mexican descent in the U.S. As such, religious, cultural and racial superiority as well as nativist sentiment from the dominant group has colored the formal schooling and social inclusion of Mexican Americans, including immigrants of Mexican descent, in the United States.

In its beginnings, the public educational system was completely controlled by Anglos. Anglos took charge of all areas, from administration to teaching to curriculum development (Acuña, 1998). Under the argument that Mexican children needed a different cultural and linguistic environment to learn, they were denied admission to Anglo schools and destined to learn in homogeneous and segregated schools (Spring 2010), giving birth to a new form of institutional discrimination against this population. As a response to these discriminatory practices, Mexican communities and Catholic groups established their own schools which promoted and preserved some of their cultural, historical and linguistic heritage (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). This religious education in character, the lack of enforcement of compulsory attendance, high rates of drop-outs, and the need to work among Mexican children ameliorated, in a way, the deculturalization process of certain sectors of the Mexican population (Spring, 2010; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). However, these particular schooling practices found a new challenge as public officials deemed necessary to Americanize public schools. According to Spring (2010), this "deculturalization program was designed to strip away Mexican values and culture and replace the use of Spanish with English" (p. 96). This stance

[5] During Queen Elizabeth times, English thought of Spaniards as not much better that light-skinned Moors and Africans with non-Protestant religious practices. It is believed that English immigrants probably brought these ideas with them. (De León, 1998).

supports the Europeans' attitude of racial, religious and cultural superiority towards Mexican immigrants. The change removed the ethnic and religious community, the use of Spanish as a means of instruction and the Mexican culture in schools (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Blanton, 2004). This nativist campaign against diversity impacted public institutions throughout the country and aimed to promote the "purity" of Anglo-American culture (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; original emphasis). In 1918, the Texas legislature criminalized the use of any other languages other than English in schools. The prohibition of Spanish in schools not only violated the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed in 1848 but also marked the beginning of institutional discriminatory attitudes toward the Spanish language, and therefore toward native speakers of Spanish.

Mexican American Legal Struggles for Educational Equity

In 1929, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a Hispanic civic rights organization, was formed in Texas. Membership was restricted to U.S. citizens, and the organization was dedicated to fighting discrimination against Mexican Americans, particularly segregation and lack of equal educational opportunities. Although the organization praised Mexican cultural heritage and was also concerned with anti-Mexican bias and misrepresentation of Mexicans in textbooks (Spring, 2010), it had a very assimilationist stance (Marquez, 2003). LULAC promoted the full adaptation of its members into the dominant U.S. Anglo culture, believing this tactic would be the most successful in combating discrimination. Asserting that it was not the economic or political intuitions that were flawed, but rather that discrimination was the result of

racism alone, LULAC believed individuals could change negative perceptions Anglo held of Mexican Americans and find economic success (Marquez, 2003).

Alvarez v. Lemon Grove (1931) is considered the first successful desegregation court case in the nation. The court ruled that separate facilities for Mexican American students were not conducive towards their Americanization, which also delayed their English-language acquisition (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). The *Mendez v. Westminster* case (1946, 1947) was the first federal court decision of anti-segregation in California and also questioned the legality of segregating Mexican Americans on the basis of language. A year later, *Delgado et al. v. Bastrop Independent School District of Bastrop County et al.* in Texas determined that Mexican American students' constitutional rights were being violated. However, school districts throughout Texas failed to comply with this law (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998).

In education, Latinos gained some benefits by the school integration efforts initiated by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), in the 1930s and 1940s (Moran, 1995). The NAACP's litigations and the cases mentioned above culminated in the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared it to be inherently unequal to have separate educational facilities even when mandated by law. *Brown* originally stood as an opposition to race-based classifications and aimed to fight racial segregation in school settings. This emergent colorblindness had an assimilationist undertone since previous disadvantaged Blacks now had to conform to white norms (Moran, 1995). Some see this measure as a missed opportunity for the outgrowth of a healthy racial identity because "this framework has elevated race and ethnicity to a position of central importance in defining equality of

opportunity (Moran, 1995, p. 137). Color consciousness started to be seen as a vestige of racism. To date, we continue to see racial segregation in urban schools. The common argument to explain contemporary segregation in our schools is that this is just the result of economics and personal preference or choice rather than discriminatory practices of the past. As the Latino population expands and affluent residents −particularly white− opt to reside in areas away from large enclaves of minority communities, the segregation of Latino students has been growing (Laosa, 2001, Valdés, 2001). Orfield and Lee (2006) refer to this particular situation as triple segregation modality in our schools: color, poverty and linguistic isolation.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, Mexican Americans have expanded their litigation efforts to cases regarding desegregation, school finance, undocumented school children, special education and school closures (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). In *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District* (1971) and *Keyes v. School District Number One* (1973), the Court decided that Mexican Americans are an identifiable minority group and cannot be paired with African Americans for purposes of desegregation (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). *Rodriguez et al. v. San Antonio Independent School District et al.* (1971) marked a different kind of litigation towards equity for the Mexican American community. This financial disparity case, commonly known as the Robin Hood law, finally passed in 1995, and stipulates that property-rich school districts had to share their local tax money with property-poor school districts.

There have been some setbacks in the fight for educational equity of Latino students. For example, in California Proposition 187 (1994)[6], Proposition 209 (1996)[7]

[6] Proposition 187 was designed to create a state-run citizenship screening system in order to prohibit undocumented from using health care, public education, and other social services in the state of California.

and Proposition 227 (1998)[8] seriously limit the access to equal educational opportunities for Latinos. In Texas, *Hopwood v. State of Texas* (1992), a reverse discrimination lawsuit, made it illegal to use race/ethnicity and gender (affirmative action admissions) in undergraduate and graduate admissions in institutions of higher education. As the result of *Hopwood v. State of Texas* (1992), the University stopped considering race in admissions and substituted instead a new holistic metric of a candidate's potential contribution to the University, to be used in conjunction with the Academic Index. This "Personal Achievement Index" (PAI) measures a student's leadership and work experience, awards, extracurricular activities, community service, and other special circumstances that give insight into a student's back ground. These included growing up in a single-parent home, speaking a language other than English at home, significant family responsibilities assumed by the applicant, and the general socioeconomic condition of the student's family. As reported by San Miguel & Valencia (1998), *Hopwood's* decision has clearly decreased the enrollment of Mexican American, other Latino and African American undergraduate students in the University of Texas system. It also decreased sharply the amount of financial aid for Latino and African American students. While some critics of Affirmative Action may see *Hopwood* as fair treatment for all, they neglect to take into account the historical struggle that non-dominant groups have endured (and continue to endure) to have an equal place in U.S. society.

Although certain parts of the law (including the education piece) were deemed unconstitutional and were never enforced, its passage still appears to have had an impact in terms of intimidation of the immigrant community.

[7] Proposition 206 amended the state of California's constitution to prohibit public institutions from considering race, sex and ethnicity, which clearly affects minority students' enrollment in higher education institutions.

[8] Under the guise of making all limited English proficient students proficient in English, Proposition 227 had the effect of eliminating the use of bilingual instruction in most cases in California.

Recently, *Fisher v. UT Austin* (2012) reignited the polemic about race as a determinant for admissions to institutions of higher education. The suit against the University of Texas was filed in 2008 by two white students who were denied entry into UT Austin. The two women alleging that the University had discriminated against them on the basis of their race in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution. Most students are admitted to UT Austin under the Top Ten Percent Plan, which guarantees admission to all Texas students in the top ten percent of their high school class. The remaining students are admitted under a holistic admissions process that considers race as one of many factors in a student's application file. Plaintiff Fisher (one of the two women who remained in the case) would have not been admitted to UT Austin anyways based on her low SAT scores of 3.1 and her low (>6) holistic review process. Although the Supreme Court recognized the significant educational benefits of diversity, not just for students of color, but for all students and for our entire country, the case is a reminder for all of the strong role race continues to play in our society.

A reflection of more contemporary issues in the U.S., Mexican American plaintiffs initiated a lawsuit on behalf of undocumented Mexican immigrant students. In 1982, *Plyler v. Doe* addressed the concern about creating a permanent underclass, particularly of unauthorized immigrants, if basic services such as education were denied them. The Court held that denying such an education would punish children for their parents' acts, which would hamper their ability to pursue fulfilling productive adult lives (Russell, 2007; Rincón, 2004; Yates, 2004; Moran, 1995). It was noted that many undocumented children were apt to stay in the United States indefinitely and become

permanent legal residents or citizens. Thus, free public education from kindergarten through 12th grade was preferred over the creation of a subclass of "illiterates," which the Court argued would surely add to the problems and costs of unemployment, welfare and crime within our boundaries (*Plyler v. Doe* 1982).

Although *Plyler vs. Doe* provided a great breakthrough that benefited the educational efforts of Mexican Americans, undocumented students continue to have a big barrier: legal status. While the "college continuation rate" is higher for unauthorized immigrants who arrive as young children (14> 42%; <14 61%), it is still considerably lower than the rate for legal immigrants (76%) or U.S.-born residents (71%), according to the report by Passel & Cohn (2009). A key aspect of this low postsecondary education rate among undocumented students is legal status. Because of their legal residency status, undocumented students are ineligible for financial aid.[9] Federal law authorizes postsecondary educational institutions to deny undocumented students the in-state tuition rates available to residents, making it impossible for most undocumented students to continue their education because of socioeconomic issues.[10] Only some states have granted undocumented students (Sanders, 2010, Gonzales, 2008) in-state tuition to public colleges and universities[11]. By denying undocumented students the opportunity to receive in-state tuition and financial aid, the government denies these young people the possibility of upward mobility that higher education affords (Romero, 2002; Rincón,

[9] The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 precludes undocumented immigrants from qualifying for federal financial aid or student loans.

[10] The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 prohibits states from offering undocumented immigrants the lower tuition rates offered to state residents.

[11] Since 2001, ten states have passed laws permitting certain undocumented students who have attended and graduated from their primary and secondary schools to pay the same tuition as their in-state classmates at public institutions of higher education. These states are California, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Washington and Utha.

2004). In essence, undocumented students are condemned to low-paying jobs and futures in the lowest socioeconomic sectors (Yates, 2004), because even if they are able to pay in-state tuition, they cannot work after they graduate from college due to their legal residency status. These situations perpetuate life in poverty for immigrant families in comparison with native-born families (20.7% vs. 13.4%) (Hernandez et al., 2008).

Advocates of immigrant children have been fighting to legalize the status of undocumented students who continue their post-secondary education. The first version of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) was introduced in 2001 with the intent to benefit students who were brought to the United States more than 5 years prior to high school graduation; entered the country at age 15 or younger; and were able to demonstrate good moral character. It would also enable high school graduates to apply for conditional status of legal residence for up to six years, with the condition of advancing to postsecondary education and to graduate from a two-year college or complete at least two years toward a four-year degree; or serve in the military. After meeting these requirements, students would be eligible for permanent residency (Rincón, 2008).

Numerous studies (Gonzales, 2009; Perez, 2009; Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008; Bejarano 2005; Suárez-Orozco, C. & Suárez-Orozco, M., 2001; Valenzuela, 1999) with adolescents and young adults show the intricacies of education and legal status. The literature (Gonzales, 2009) gives us a glimpse at numerous accounts of undocumented students' stories who after completing their college education are still in the shadows and unable to pursue their careers due to legal status. Some highly educated undocumented students take drastic measures like self-deportation with hopes of regularizing their legal

status (Zarella, 2010). Others with specialized degrees make a living cleaning houses and babysitting (Perez, 2009). Legal status is thus highly salient for young immigrant students' success in school and for their identity formation. Recently, and after I started this study, changes to the immigration reform passed Deferred Action legislation that provide undocumented youth who migrated to the US before the age 16 with pathways for integration in US systems like higher education and the workforce (Mangual Figueroa, 2013). Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, was passed on June 15, 2012. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services webpage, certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several key guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal, and would then be eligible for work authorization. Although this measure does not provide an individual with lawful status, it gives people the opportunity to legalize their status temporarily.

Next, I present a brief synopsis of Central American history as this relates to the U.S. and people migration. This analysis is not exhaustive and only highlights key historical events that shaped Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala in the latter part of the last century.

Central American Immigrants: Brief Synopsis and History

As reviewed in the previous section, Mexican-origin populations have a long standing history in the U.S. that can be traced to the origins of this nation. Mexicans and Mexican Americans have helped shape the face, traditions, economy, politics and culture of this country in a myriad of ways that go from celebrations to food to the modern

education and immigration law. The latter part of the twentieth century also witnessed international events that eventually impacted culture, foreign politics, financial interests and society in the U.S.

During the 1980s, the world watched with awe the horrifying events developing in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. The revolution and counterinsurgency in Nicaragua, the civil war in El Salvador and the counterinsurgency in Guatemala were each the product of decades of struggles over land, resources and power (García, 2006; La Fabre, 1993; Menjívar, 2000; Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2001). The political turmoil in these countries resulted in an unprecedented surge in internal, regional, and international migration that affected dozens of nations, including neighboring Costa Rica, Honduras and Mexico, hemispheric allies such as the U.S. and Canada; and even Cuba, the Soviet Union and the European community (García, 2006, Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2001).

The highly politicized war stories of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, however, show great parallelism among themselves, with the U.S. as the common denominator. Because of fear of Communist expansion in the hemisphere, the U.S. played a significant role in the development of events in these countries. The U.S. devoted political, material resources, funding, and diplomatic and political energy that affected institutions and policy in those countries (Booth et, al., 2010). In Nicaragua, the Reagan administration supported the contra war against the oppositional group the Sandinistas; in El Salvador the U.S. increased four times its military aid in three years; and in Guatemala the CIA trained troops which were subsequently implicated in the

torture and murder of civilians, the majority of whom were indigenous people (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2001). Menjívar (2000) reminds us that,

> The United States has had a long history of social, political, economic, and cultural influence in the Central America region that has resulted in the development of social conduits through which goods, information, and technology have traveled. This, in turn, has created conditions that have allowed Central Americans to migrate to the United States over the years. (p. 63).

The Catholic Church also influenced greatly the area by encouraging social mobilization through their liberation theology approach, which in some cases contributed to insurrection (Booth et. al., 2010). Although Central Americans share a common history and have faced similar challenges, there are important social and cultural differences among them that are important to take into account (Menjívar, 2000).

In Nicaragua, the power resided in the Somoza family from 1934 until 1979 when the Sandinistas insurgency overthrew the U.S.-supported government. The U.S. became heavily involved in the internal politics of the country, with U.S. Marines occupying the country between 1912-1933 (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2001). The U.S. regarded the Somozas' government as reliable allies in the Cold War with Russia and rewarded them with millions of dollars in economic and military aid, much of which ended up in the private coffers of the ruling family (García, 2006). When President Somoza was overthrown from power in 1979, the U.S. "involved itself deeply trying to block the growing rebellion" and contain Communism in the region (Booth et, al., 2010, p. 55). Furthermore, U.S. corporations benefited enormously by controlling thousands of acres of the country's most fertile lands and owning or managing the leading mines, the railroads, and the lumber and banking industries (García, 2006). However, the extensive U.S. presence in the country's national life "never guaranteed the people peace or

socioeconomic mobility" (García, 2006, p. 14). The majority of the population lived in rural areas primarily with no access to potable water. Children suffered malnourishment, and one in ten died before one year of age (La Fabre, 1993).

In El Salvador, the civil war was also motivated by the unequal distribution of power. In the 1960s, the Catholic Church's "theology of liberation" was the catalyst for the emergence of groups that demanded social justice (García, 2006) and promoted the welfare of the poor (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2001). But a number of guerrillas also emerged. The country's national security agencies tried to eliminate the rebels and dissenters establishing an era of terror and intimidation among the population, particularly the clergy (García, 2006; Booth et, al., 2010). The motto of one the of the groups was, for example, "Be a Patriot—kill a priest!" (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2001). Paramilitary groups named "escuadrones de la muerte" (death squads) were so barbaric that "Thousands of mutilated corpses appeared in town sewers, garbage dumps, street gutters… left as a warning to others: eyes gouged, tongues and limbs severed, breasts, genitalia and throats slashed" (García, 2006, p. 22). Despite the human rights violations against Salvadorans, the United States continued providing military support to the country and providing training for their soldiers in U.S. soil (LeoGrande, 1998) The U.S., however, saw the insurgency in El Salvador as a case of indirect armed aggression with Communist powers acting through Cuba (García, 2006).

In Guatemala, the story was not much different. "Two percent of the population controlled 72 percent of all private land, while 60 percent of Guatemalans earned roughly two dollars a day harvesting export crops such as coffee, sugar, and cotton" (García, 2006, p. 26). In 1954, President elect Arbenz was overthrown in a coup led by military

leaders funded and trained by the CIA (Schoultz, 1998). Under agrarian reform the government of Arbenz had transferred land to a hundred thousand landless peasant families. This measure directly affected the U.S.-owned United Fruit Company, which had important ties to members of the Eisenhower administration and pressured the U.S. to intervene (García, 2006; Schoultz, 1998). In the subsequent civil war, the army particularly targeted the Mayans and entire communities were slaughtered (García, 2006). Many of these atrocities have been recounted by Nobel Prize Winner Rigoberta Menchú in her controversial testimonial account *Yo, Rigoberta Menchú* (1998). Because of the proximity with Mexico, many survivors fled to Mexico. Besides massive killings to eliminate the rebels, the Guatemalan government initiated a campaign of indoctrination and cultural annihilation for those that applied for amnesty (García, 2006). People were only allowed to speak Spanish and Catholicism and indigenous rituals were strongly discouraged in favor of evangelical Protestantism that taught subservience to authority (García, 2006).

Before 1970, it was common for people from Central America to migrate to nearby countries in search of temporary work in farming (García, 2006; Menjívar, 2000). It was common for Salvadorans to migrate to Honduras and for Guatemalans to migrate to Mexico, and migration to more distant countries was rare. Migration within and between Central American countries, including migrating to Mexico and the U.S., has been closely tied with economic, political, and social developments in the region and its incorporation into the world economy (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2001; Chavez, 1998). In general, but particularly for Salvadorans, the most impoverished migrants remained inside their countries or in adjacent areas; those with financial or social

resources migrated to the U.S. However, they were by no means an affluent group (Menjívar, 2000). By the early 1980s, the level of generalized violence and terror left Central Americans with little alternative but to join revolutionary groups or to flee (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2001). But when the massive exodus of people from Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala became an issue for other governments, the host nations preferred to view the groups "as economic migrants because it freed them from any responsibility" (García, 2006, p. 33; Menjívar, 2000; Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2001).

Mexico has been historically one of the go-to countries for Central Americans, whether because they are looking for refuge or because they are in transit to *el norte* (north). Undocumented, Central Americans suffer a number of abuses on their travel through Guatemala and Mexico, including from police forces (García, 2006; Menjívar, 2000; Nazario, 2006). The *transmigrantes'* (trans-migrants), Mexico's term for Central Americans en route to the U.S., decisions to move to the U.S. have much to do with Mexico's immigration policy. Similar to U.S. visa requirements to grant visas to Central and South Americans, Mexican consular processes require bank accounts with lofty balances, land and real estate ownership documents and proof of income (Menjívar, 2000). Although no guarantee of approval, these requirements are supposed to prove that the persons asking for visas have an established life in their country of origin and have no intention to stay in the U.S. permanently. The journey is particularly dangerous for women as these are most of the time victims of rape (Menjívar, 2000). There are, however, numerous accounts of Mexican people that provide unconditional assistance,

food and refuge to *transmigrantes* on their trip to *el norte* (Nazario, 2006; Menjívar, 2000).

Although Mexicans continue to represent the largest immigrant group in the U.S., Central American immigrants have started to be recognized as among the significant Latino groups. Among these, Salvadorans are considered one of the fastest growing groups of Latinos in the U.S., with Los Angeles as the city with the largest concentration of this group (Menjívar, 2000). Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla (2001) explain that Central Americans differ from many other immigrant groups in that they are neither strictly economic migrants nor accepted as refugees, but have the characteristics of both. Although many Central Americans' situations were similar to others that fled political persecution, or more generally, conditions resulting from war and civil unrest, their applications for asylum to the U.S. were routinely denied during the 1980s, and they lacked access to refugee assistance available to such groups as the Cubans and the Vietnamese (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2001; Menjívar, 2000).

Mexico, the U.S. and Canada politicized the system that determined refugee status or failed to offer legal status that adequately addressed the refugee crisis, in large part to discourage further migration to their territories (García, 2006). Increased hostility toward Latino immigrants and strong anti-immigrant feelings in the U.S. have aggravated the uncertainty and vulnerability of Central American undocumented immigrants (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2001). Examples of these are California's Proposition 87 and the 1996 Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, which reduces certain benefits for immigrants and increased the cost of bringing family members to the U.S.

The following section provides a more detailed analysis of Latino immigration in the context of the contemporary U.S.

Immigration Studies

While public attention is focused on the legalization of unauthorized immigrants in the country, little attention is given to children of immigrant families, –many of whom live in mixed-status families where children are citizens but their parents and/or older siblings lack legal documents (Newhouse, 2007). The well-being of these children is influenced by the legal status of their parents as well as by their own (Harvard Immigration Project, 2005). Immigrants often leave their countries and families in search of a better life and better working conditions. For many of these immigrant children their relocation is involuntary (Padilla & Durán, 1995), meaning they do not have a choice; choices are made for them in hopes of a better future away from war, poverty or hunger, or to escape political, religious, or ethnic persecution (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

There are many factors associated with individual and/or collective decisions to immigrate to the United States, whether these are financial, cultural, or related to freedom or family reunification. Studies on immigration control policy explain how governments decide on the number of immigrants they will accept, whether to differentiate between various ethnic groups, whether to accept refugees and on what basis, and whether to favor permanent immigration over migrant work (Meyers, 2004). The United States has a long history of picking-and-choosing strategies in terms of granting entry into the country. Permanent immigration to the U.S. is also permeated by the implementation of double

standards. On the one hand, selection strategies restrict entry to the poor by requiring sponsors in the United States to support the immigrant once in the country, making the latter ineligible for welfare benefits. This tactic also permits the government to sue the sponsor in the event the sponsored receives any type of social services (1996 U.S. Welfare Reform)[12]. On the other hand, there is the practice of encouraging immigration of highly skilled professional workers in areas such as science, medicine, education and computer science to compete for skilled labor with other receiving countries (Cornelius et al., 1994).

The interaction between socioeconomic trends, foreign policy considerations and the type of immigration (temporary, permanent, refugee status, undocumented) shapes immigration control policies, thereby contributing to greater public hostility toward immigrants in general –regardless of legal status– and putting pressure on states to adopt more restrictive policies (Meyers, 2007). As a result, anti-immigrant feelings prevail. Another measure is to block policies or programs that would aid or accelerate the socioeconomic and cultural integration of settled immigrants and their children, such as access to higher education due to unauthorized status. Polices also discourage permanent settlement by tightening citizenship requirements, including imposing expensive fees for such processes and efforts to deny citizenship to the native-born children of undocumented immigrants (Cornelius et al., 1994). The popular discourse on the immigration debate portrays Latino immigrants as crime-prone and a drag on the economy.

[12] Critics of the 1996 U.S. Welfare Reform (Espenshade et al., 1997) argued that reform measures, instead of preserving legal immigration and discouraging illegal immigration, are more likely to reduce the former and expand incentives for the latter.

The media is a major propagator of negative, stereotypical and uncritical information about immigrants. It is common to see immigration as popular topic in web-based news or on-line articles about immigration and immigrants. The majority of the comments are extremely negative against immigrants[13] and show public sentiment against immigrants based on ignorance. Cornelius (2002) explains that labor-force participation rates among recent Latino (un/documented) immigrants are high; filling low-wage, low-skill jobs that native-born Americans typically avoid. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1995) cite several important studies where it is clear that the economic contribution of immigrants to the state, the county and the federal government is far greater than what they cost the system. We can no longer see immigrant workers as pure workers, like the "bracero"[14] wave of earlier decades (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2002; Henderson, 2011). Migration has historically been structured by family ties (Boehm, 2012), these being family reunification, relocating in search of better horizons, or sending remittances to support families across borders Long gone are the days of when Mexicans came and went, with relatively few choosing to settle permanently in the US (Henderson, 2011). Immigrant workers are human beings enmeshed in family relationships, and it is not only fair, but also humanistic to advocate for the wellbeing of their families.

The aforementioned studies and approaches contribute to our understanding of immigration in general terms. At the micro level, however, migration should be defined

[13] Responses to articles related to immigration "Arrest and deport, period. No more anchor babies. Send them all back to their countries," "…illegals do great damage to public finances, since U.S. taxpayers are required to provide massive subsidies," or "Why must people that come here illegally demand citizenship and welfare money. Article: "Napolitano sidesteps congressman's call for immigration compassion;" March 30, 2011; http://www.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/04/01/illegal.immigrant.families/index.html?iref=allsearch

[14] The Bracero Program was instituted as a response to the shortage of labor resulting from World War II. Agricultural workers convinced the United States government to enter into the Bracero Program, a large scale contract labor program that legally hired Mexican workers. "Braceros were the perfect exploitable underclass, willing to work for low wages and in deplorable conditions." (García, 1995, p. 127).

as a family affair since it invariably affects the group that stays in the country of origin as well as the group members that embark upon the journey (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2008; Orellana et al., 2001; Menjívar, 2000; Chávez, 1998; Boehm, 2012). Most immigrant families manage to maintain contact with their homeland while at the same time reinvent their new lives and old family themes in the new land (Falicov, 2002). Immigrants adopt a balance of continuity of old traditions and the acquisitions of new ones in the host country. In a study conducted by Hagan and Rodriguez (2002) on the effects of deportation, a substantial number of deportees responded that they had made lives for themselves in the United States, not unlike those long-term residents with legal status and citizenship. Although dual nationality and transnational lives are perceived by the general public as a common denominator among immigrants, it is in fact a practice only of immigrants who can afford trips back and forth to their country of origin and that have proper documentation to reenter the U.S. (Suárez–Orozco & Suárez–Orozco, 2001).

Immigrants bring with them their knowledge, way of knowing and perceptions, which they compare and contrast in their new environment. Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (1995b) have termed this notion "immigrants' dual frame of reference." In a similar way, Falicov (2002) calls immigrants' dual cultural experiences "cultural bifocality." This dual frame of reference or cultural bifocality sometimes can be a disadvantage to them. After their arrival, immigrants start weighting out their loss and gains, and experience an ambiguous loss (Falicov, 2002). While some may find strength concentrating on the negative aspects of the life left behind, others experience disenchantment with the realization of the hardships that immigrants face in the host society (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (1995).

The immigration process signifies a traumatic confrontation for many. Immigrants experience stress associated with immigrant status, which can be accentuated by the ethos of reception of the host community or group (Padilla and Duran, 1995). The ethos of perception (the general social and cultural climate immigrants encounter) is an important factor in immigrants' adaptation, identity production and behavior (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Portes (1995) adds an extra layer by explaining that children of immigrants experience a traumatic confrontation as the result of conflicting social and cultural demands of the process of "growing up American." Thus, my argument is that there is a strong correlation between immigrant children's identity formation, traditions of the home and their new country, at the intersection of strong social and institutional factors, which include family, schooling and legal status.

Gendered Immigration – Women

In the earliest eras for which there is data, the late 1800s, more men migrated than women to the US (Pearce et al., 2011). But with every decade, the ratio gap narrowed until women actually outnumbered men in the 1960 census. Since then, immigrant women ages 18 and older have constituted a slight majority (Pearce et al., 2011). Among the top ten countries of origin, adult Mexican-born woman represent the largest group making up 24 percent of the total in 2008 according to Ruggles et al., (cited in Pearce et al., 2011). The reasons or motivation for women to migrate to the US are varied. Women migrate seeking educational or economic opportunities, political freedom or because of family motivations, whereas masculinized migration has been primarily driven by economic necessity (Boehm, 2012).

Gender relations in families and communities have helped determine migration patterns (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Historically, migration from Mexico and Central America to the US has been controlled by men. Women's movement has been regulated, and in general, discouraged. Until recently, men were the ones going *al norte* to work while women typically stay in their home countries, or later migrate to reunite with family or a partner. These gendered migrations resulted in transnational households in which men were in the US, and women and children in their communities in their home countries (Boehm, 2012). It is not surprising that people commonly associate unauthorized workers, "illegal aliens," migrant labors or immigrants with men. According to Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994), most research on immigration has ignored questions of gender. Recent studies, however, have shifted focus and concentrate on immigrant women (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, 2002; Mangual Figueroa, 2013; Pearce et al., 2011; Villenas & Moreno, 2010), immigrant children (Nazario, S. (2006; Orellana et al., 2001; Menjívar, 2002) and young immigrant adults (Perez, 2009; Rincón, 2004; Sánchez, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, 1995; González et al., 2003; Machado-Casas, 2009; Sanchez, 2001, 2007) from Mexico and Central America. These studies have debunked the idea that migration affects only men. These studies have also helped us understand migration as a genderized, process in which "gender is not simply a variable to be measured, but a set of social relations that organize immigration patterns" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, p. 3). I would argue that age is also an important factor to take into account when studying immigrant populations. Concentrating only on adult migrants is negating that immigration affects children.

Immigrant women are migrating autonomously suggesting a pattern rather than an exception (Pearce et al., 2011). Immigrant women, regardless of legal status, are assuming more active roles in private and public spaces, and these activities ultimately advance their families' integration in the US (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). In her study with Latina mothers in North Carolina, Villenas (2001) found that mothers talked about *consejos* (Valdés, 1996) as a means through which knowledge was produced, "passed on" and negotiated. Similarly, Villenas & Moreno (2001), illustrate for us how the critical role Latino/Mexicano mothers play in educating their children through *consejos, cuentos* and *la experiencia*. Villenas & Moreno (2001) expand on the concept of funds of knowledge by genderizing it as *mujer*-oriented knowledge:

> The woman's "funds of knowledge" certainly encompassed the spectrum of artistic, medicinal, and workskill knowledge, but it also included a reservoir of social and cultural knowledge about ways of being in the world, including, as we will discuss later, gender-specific lessons of being *una mujer de hogar* while knowing how to *valerse por si misma*. (p. 674).

In Villenas & Moreno's study (2001), daughters learned from their mothers the contradictions of being submissive, rebellious and conforming all at the same time, amid oppressive and racist stances.

Mothers are often the "first teacher" in the household (Cortez, et al., 2013: Villenas & Moreno, 2001; Elenes, et al., 2010; Valdés, 1996) who help socialize their children for both home and society. It is this *mujer*-oriented knowledge that Villenas & Moreno (2001) advance for us that I aim to explore and highlight in this study with undocumented immigrant mothers form Mexico and Central America. In most Latino households, it is mothers who teach their children the meaning of *respeto* and *educación* (Valdés, 1996), the latter of which is understood as both manners and moral values.

Latino (un)documented mothers play a critical role in the upbringing of their children. They have complex roles that go beyond the romanticized view of a passive, submissive *mujeres de casa* (women of their homes). Mangual Figueroa (2013) gives us an excellent example of migrant mothers' self-advocacy. In her ethnographic study, author Mangual Figueroa (2013) examines how two undocumented mothers socialize their children at home into social and linguistic forms for advocating themselves and those around them. I chose to use this *mujer*-oriented knowledge as a lens to answer one of the sub-questions in this study: *How do (un)documented mothers' immigration experiences influence children's self identification and the development of an ethnic identity?* Studying immigration form the point of view of undocumented immigrant mothers' teachings and socialization of their children has the potential to expand our understandings on the migration phenomena itself.

(English) Language

Ethnic identity has often been seen as intrinsically linked to linguistic identity (Bejarano, 2005, Valenzuela, 1999). Adopting an "American" identity is commonly viewed as a matter of becoming an English speaker (Olson, 1997). The main role of our educational institutions in turning immigrants into "Americans" has often been seen as a matter of turning non-English speakers into fluent English monolingual speakers. Children perceive this dynamic; they live it everyday not only in school but also in their communities. There is an academic and societal expectation of students to shed their family language and culture in order to be "acceptable" in mainstream society (Valdés, 2001; Wong Fillmore, 1991; Valenzuela, 1999). Parents and students alike are becoming

aware that American schools, implicitly and explicitly, are encouraging the loss of home language (Soto, 1997). Olsen (1997) states that "Learning English is a fundamental requirement for acceptance and participation in an English-taught curriculum and English-dominant social world" (p. 91). Most people –including teachers, administrators, parents, and even immigrant students– would agree that English is the key to academic success. It is easy. A look around would certainly indicate that the world *speaks* English.

Children who do not speak the societal language are likely to face difficulties in school (Valdés, 2001). From a very early age, immigrant children understand the message that their home linguistic identity is devaluated in the classroom; therefore they need to advance in their studies in English. Immigrants who try to maintain their native language have often been stigmatized and encounter negative attitudes in the dominant culture (Crawford, 1992; Cummins, 2001; Soto, 1997). In her study with Chicano and Mexican youth, Bejarano (2005) noted that feelings of *vergüenza* (shame) were prevalent in all physical spaces except those exclusive to Mexicanas/os, such as ESL classrooms or conversations in "their" segregated building (original emphasis). Spanish-dominant students' participation in school is curtailed greatly because of the *vergüenza* (Bejarano, 2005) and exclusion they feel for not speaking English; others prefer to pretend that they understand; what Monzó and Rueda call "passing" (2009). As reported by some of Bejarano's participants (2005), immigrant students prefer not to get involved in school activities because of their lack of English skills or to avoid being ridiculed by more fluent and native English speakers. Similarly, Monzó and Rueda (2009) report that students do not always understand instructions or lesson content, but consciously pretend to understand as a way to protect themselves from feelings of shame.

Wong Fillmore (1991) explains that when immigrant children start losing their primary language, the consequences are far-reaching. Parents lose their means to socialize and talk to their children, and thus become unable to convey their values, beliefs, understandings and *consejos* (Valdés, 1996) to cope with their experiences. Children then experience what Orellana (2003) calls role reversal identity. Role reversal occurs when children's acculturation is so far ahead than that of their parents' that parents depend on their young ones to make important family decisions. The children take on many responsibilities that parents would normally assume in dealing with the English-speaking world. Generally speaking, children significantly free themselves from parental control because they speak the dominant language and know the mainstream/whitestream culture better than their parents. Immigrant children are able to understand a new world that may be strange for their parents, and they have a newly developed identity that allows them to function and negotiate it. Children are also first and most exposed to institutions, such as schools, where examples of racism, segregation and exclusion in ways that their working parents are not. Olsen (1997) describes this process as the new Americanization project in our schools where students experience 1) academic marginalization and separation; 2) loss of native language to participate in academic and social life; and 3) the pressure to find one's place in the racial hierarchy of the United States.

Research (Bejarano, 2005; Olsen, 1997) shows that immigrant students not only become English seekers, but these students abandon their mother tongues relatively quickly, becoming English "preferers." Olsen (1997) explains that the intense desire to be accepted and able to participate in their new land results for almost all newcomers in

becoming English speaking relatively quickly. For them, it is almost painful to be culturally and linguistically different, and many hide their incipient bilingualism for their own protection (Sánchez, 2007; Monzó & Rueda, 2009). Immigrant students "assume at first that the language is synonymous with becoming American" (*ibid*., p. 241). Sadly, some students also seem to construct a link between language proficiency and intelligence or knowledge (Monzó and Rueda, 2009).

There is more than the desire to be accepted for speaking English. Portes & Rumbaut (2001) explain that immigrant students tend to shift on ethnic self-definition as they are shaped by social and psychological forces. English language adaptation also seems to be related to ethnic identities, with bilingualism common among children who identify themselves as panethnic, English dominance predominant among unhyphenated Americans and limited bilingualism related to unhyphenated national identities. As others have pointed out (Monzó and Rueda, 2009; Bejarano, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999) there is a strong correlation between English language learning and identity formation for immigrant students. In an ethnographic study with fifth grade Latino children, Monzó and Rueda (2009) found that students' passing for English speakers is tied to notions of identity, how we define who we are to preserve our sense of dignity, and agency.

We can conclude that (English) language as a representation of self is a strong social construct capable of shaping new identities. Students have the desire to fit or to appear "normal" to others based on "their" cultural assumptions and expectations. Non-dominant English speakers read their environment as not welcoming of their traditions, culture and, primarily, language. Motivated by feelings of shame and inadequacy, students shed their native linguistic vestiges that associate them to a lower level status

with the belief that speaking the dominant language will get them closer to being not different, to becoming American (Bejarano, 2005; Olsen, 1997).

Legal Status

"Border-crossing" was originally a geographical and political term involving two countries where their territories met. Urrieta (2003) argues that the use of the metaphor border-crossing has become far removed from what the term actually implies for undocumented immigrants trying to get to *this* side of the border. Crossing the border as an "illegal alien" –as the Homeland Security Department labels undocumented people– is associated with risking one's life, with the physical and emotional pain of having to cross tall metal walls, brave hot deserts or suffer rape victim in the middle of nowhere (Martinez, 2001). Many immigrant students currently in our schools have come face to face with the real physical border crossing. They either crossed the border without proper documentation or a family member experienced traveling to the United States that way. Migratory status becomes a way of life for many people on both sides of the border: for the ones that left, and for the ones who stayed.

In her study of Mexican and Chicano high school students, Bejarano (2005) found that conversations about being legal or illegal, deportation and permanent residency applications are quite common among immigrant students while passing time together. In contrast, Chicano students, not preoccupied by these matters, talk about more trivial things related to their age such as a weekend party or a basketball game. Similarly, DREAMers[15] (Perez, 2009; Gonzales, 2008) imagine a better and different future for

[15] Undocumented students affected by the DREAM Act are referred as DREAMers . The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) would benefit students who were brought to the

themselves if they only had *papers*. In three small-scale pilot studies I conducted with immigrant children and one undocumented mother, the theme of legal status was recurrent. As expressed by Aurora, my mother informant, "I believe that legal status does affect my children. Sometimes they feel that they are pushed aside [in school], like in the case of my daughter that was asked [about her legal status] by a teacher. She does not know yet the intention people have. She was afraid and asked me if she was going to be run out of school." Joe, an 18-year old participant in another study (Godinez, 2006), also made several references to legal status during our conversations. For Joe, being American meant having privileges such as a good job with a better salary, medical insurance and benefits, and, even though he did not mention it specifically, having the freedom to go back home to visit relatives in Mexico, in short having *papeles*. In my pilot study, a talkative third grade boy insisted, "I am from Mexico, but I have my passport at home," when the story[16] we were reading prompted a discussion related to migrating to the United States. I argue that (un)documented status is a defining and determining factor ever-present in the lives of immigrants and their children, that invariably impacts the way they conduct themselves in school and in everyday life.

As shown by the above examples, immigrant children and youth face different issues beyond the concerns a typical teenager encounters (Bejarano, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Not only are immigrant students often discriminated based on their race/ethnicity, gender, class, language and dress, but they also have to deal with legal status issues. Indeed, thoughts and concerns about being separated from their families, being sent back to their countries of origin, not being able to ever see a parent, or the constant feel of

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U.S. more than 5 years ago; entered the country at age 15 or younger; and are able to demonstrate good moral character.

[16] *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del Otro Lado* by Gloria Anzaldúa (1997).

being "hunted" (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) have repercussions in how they cope with their reality and conduct themselves. Immigrant children are already psychologically vulnerable because immigration itself is a highly stressful process. Padilla & Durán (1995) summarize some reports that "demonstrate that immigrants do experience stress associated with their status as immigrants and that this stress correlates to their heightened anxiety and lowered feelings of self-worth, including self-appraisals of intelligence and physical attractiveness" (p. 143).

Having *papeles*, in my view and personal experience, surpasses language and cultural factors for some. Legal status or the lack thereof has major consequences for the way immigrants conduct their lives. Aside from being a legal requirement to reside in the U.S, (un)documentation is a very strong determinant of how immigrants make sense of their lives and that of their families. As an immigrant myself, I can attest to a sense of not belonging, of incompleteness, of *unsureness* powerful enough to dictate one's life. More than any other thing, the uncertainty of my legal adjustment made me extremely vulnerable. With my employer's signature, I applied for adjustment of status one year after coming to work to the United States. After seven years and several thousand dollars in attorney fees, my husband and I became permanent residents. Five years later and another several thousand dollars, we were eligible to apply for naturalization. During those thirteen years of our lives many things were at stake: job, money, housing, family relations, visiting dying family members, funerals, even having children and saving for the future. As some studies point out (Padilla & Durán, 1995; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006), the immigration process poses a psychological cost, even for well-educated adults, despite the potential advantages the

individuals may have in terms of educational background, knowledge of English and legal status.

Falicov (2002) explains that the immigrant experience carries a mix of loss, grief and mourning, compared to the process of grief precipitated by the death of a loved one. Compared to death, migration loss can be both larger and smaller: larger–there is the loss of native language, land, customs, traditions and family members who stayed behind; smaller – the losses are not absolutely clear, complete and irretrievable, everything is still alive but not immediately present or reachable. All these new and old experiences "create a mix of emotions –sadness and elation, loss and restitution, absence and presence– that makes grieving incomplete, postponed, ambiguous" (Falicov, 2002, p. 274). Suárez–Orozco & Suárez–Orozco (2001) extend that notion of traumatic confrontation by adding that Latino immigrant children that reunite with their parents after a long separation, undergo a second mourning stage for losing attachments with their caregivers, while trying to renegotiate and adapt to their parents' and social expectations in their new land. Nazario's (2006) account of an immigrant Central American teenager traveling alone through Mexico in search of his mom in the U.S., exemplifies this mourning stage. Enrique's mother left for the United States in search for work when he was 5 years old. He experiences prolonged anguished for his mother's absence, but when they are finally reunited in the U.S., Enrique is not able to get along with his mother and or get used to his new life, longing for his grandmother in Honduras. The teenager experiences the loss of his grandmother who raised him during his mother's absence and externalizes this fighting his mother for leaving him alone.

Community, School and Family

Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco and Todorova (2008) identify the contexts of families, peers and school of particular significance for Latino immigrant children's integration. The "ethos of reception" (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001), the general social and cultural climate immigrants encounter, shaped by the attitudes and beliefs of the larger society, affect immigrant children's perceptions of themselves and their families. There is the tendency to vilify immigrants during bad economic times and to ignore them when in times of economic prosperity.

For Latino immigrant children in the U.S, schools are the first systematic contact with the new culture (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Olsen, 1997). One way or another, schools are shaping generations of young people, and it is unclear if these students and their families are aware of it (Monzó & Rueda, 2009). Children are "becoming American," and that is changing the way they relate to their families, to their ancestors back in their home countries (Menjívar, 2002; Wong Fillmore, 1991), and to society at large. Furthermore, the new pattern of segregation in our schools is defined not only by color, but also by poverty and linguistic isolation (Orfiled & Lee, 2006). Non-dominant English speakers have few opportunities to socialize with mainstream students. This dynamic also contributes to the perpetuation of negative feelings that mainstream groups have towards immigrant students (Valenzuela, 1999).

Parental and co-ethnic influence is another very relevant aspect in the identity formation and adjustment of Mexican and Central American immigrant students. Parents and students also tend to develop ambivalence towards their own language and culture as a reflection of the dynamics observed in the school system and the society at large in

respect to other languages and cultures. They distance themselves from what is Mexican because *Mexicanness* is associated with inferiority in the American imagination (Bejarano, 2005). This is what Nieto (2002) refers to as a combination of shame and pride that young people have towards their culture, that sometimes the pain is so great that they prefer to become American in traditional terms. Halcón states that "…ambivalence toward one's language and culture, and, at worst, a self-hate that hinders learning" (Reyes & Halcón, 2001, p.73) is evident among some immigrant students in their fight to find their place in the mainstream society.

In a schooling and social context that devalues most non-U.S. cultures and most non-English languages, "American-ness" (Valenzuela, 1999) assumes a countercultural connotation. Several studies (Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008; Valenzuela, 1999; Olsen, 1997) suggest that Latino immigrants' need and long to be accepted by the more Americanized group contributed to youths' accelerated effort to assimilate. This assimilation can be translated in terms of preference of dress, music, language and other age-related interests and activities. In efforts of fitting in or not being the Other, immigrants succumb to the pressures to cease their foreign ways and to act American, losing in the process part of their ethnic identity and culture. This is precisely what Valenzuela (1999) refers to as subtractive schooling, that is, assimilationist policies and practices in schools that minimize the culture and heritage language of immigrant youth.

Theoretical Framework

My decision to draw from varying one framework from different theories resides in the need to illustrate the complex and dynamic ways in which immigrant students

improvise, re-create themselves and exercise their agency within socially inscribed positions. As social actors, immigrant students in the U.S. are enmeshed in socio-historical power relations by which they experience and enact their identities. I draw form Identity Theory, Critical Race Theory, LatCrit Theory and Chicana Feminist epistemology from which to analyze the experiences of immigrant students of Mexican and Central American origin.

Social Practice Theory of Self and Identity

The notion of identity is central to this study of the parallel identity development of immigrant students of Mexican and Central American origin. I begin with Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain's (1998) definition of identity as "self understandings". These self understandings have a strong cultural production perspective as people constantly change their perception of who they are by drawing on their cultural heritage and context. Identity is therefore understood as a relational, dynamic, co-constructed cultural phenomenon. This constant flux of identity production is based on the past at the intersection of our current lived experiences, mediated by cultural artifacts and discourses. Consequently, as situations change so do a person's self understandings. Thus, identity is a continuous process of self-remaking. Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of identity production is critical in conceptualizing the agency of Latino immigrant students within their micro (family) and macro (larger society) figured worlds because it provides an alternative to psychological models to analyze identity production (Urrieta, 2009, 2007).

Identity, however, is not merely a matter of self-understanding. Holland et al. (1998) argue that, "identity is a concept that figuratively combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations" (p. 5). As individuals, we recognized or have an idea of who we are, however society (power relations, regimen of power) organizes us differently –self recognition and recognition of others. Particularly, the sociocultural and historical knowledge of actors/institutions influence in important ways how we are positioned. We learn to see the world from the positions in which we are persistently cast and seen as the "generalized other". Thus, there is also power distribution in figured worlds in which people are ordered and ranked (Urrieta, 2007).

Holland et al. (1998) refer to a long-term identity development, or "thickening" of identity which happens through day-to-day encounters over a period of time. It is during these daily interactions that participants engage in conversations and interactions that construct their own social position and that of others. Thus, identities are co-constructed. Daily practices also allow participants to position themselves situationally in relation to one another. Holland & Lachicotte (2007) establish that one pursues opportunities to enact one's claimed identities and thereby validates them for one self and for others. For example, a person may think of himself as an important individual and he/she works hard so the rest can see him/her as an important person. Individuals are capable of forming senses of self in relation to roles, positioning, self-authoring and how these identities interact with others exerting some degree of agency and self-control in culturally constructed worlds –some of which might be inclusive and exclusive at the same time depending of the actors' social labeling, ranking assignment. Identity theory

takes into account the daily lived experiences of individuals, which will allow me to explore immigrant students' agency within daily interactions (Holland et al., 1998).

In order to study the ethnic identity formation of children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America, it is important to take into account their identity development in relation to that of their ethnic group and larger societal groups. The work of della Porta & Viani (2006) on social movements and identity helped me analyze how individuals shape, develop and construct identities at the intersection of collective involvement and personal engagement. Urrieta's work (2007) on becoming, and not on being (Gee, 2001), is also critical for the understanding of how children of immigrant develop an ethnic identity. Individuals experience the dynamics of self-recognition and recognition by others. In the case of Latino immigrant children, membership to certain groups allows them to construct and/or reproduce identities as part of social processes. della Porta & Viani (2006) state that identities are polycentric rather than having a hierarchical structure. That is, it is rare for a dominant identity to be able to integrate all others. Gee (2001) advances for us the notion of "kinds of people" to explain that one is being recognized as "being" at a given time, place, and context.

Identities are both static and dynamic and can be shaped by the sociocultural and historical context in which individuals dwell (Holland et al., 1998; Urrieta, 2007). Identities can be static, as the collective (individual) belief follows a target, yet they can be dynamic as this target changes and adapts to specific circumstances and needs of the collective (or of the individual). Thus, individual identity plays a key role in the collective identity because one feeds from the other, and vice versa (della Porta & Viani, 2006). The fluidity and dynamism of individual polycentric identity allows social actors

to forge co-existing identities that do not necessarily conflict with each other. Latino immigrant students' bicultural notions allow them to co-exist in their school world and in their ethnic world without much conflict. Identities can be contradicting, this study seeks to analyze how Latino immigrant students' self authoring provides them the tools to navigate successfully both their home/ethnic figured world and the U.S. society figured world.

This production and enactment of different identities bring us to what Holland et al. (1998) call figured worlds. Identities are produced as individuals participate in the activities organized around particular settings, that is, figured worlds. Figured worlds, according to Holland et al (1998), are imagined communities that operate dialectically and dialogically in "as if" worlds. These worlds are shaped by social realities and power dynamics under the auspices of culture. These are the sites where identities are produced on a daily basis. Holland et al. (1998) argue that for these figured worlds to exist there needs to be a collective agreement regarding the interpretation of words and actions that will constitute such a site. Figure worlds are also spaces for individuals' agency and improvisation from where people better organize their subjectivities around particular issues and thus emerge with shifts in identity production (Urrieta, 2007). In sum, figured worlds are culturally constructed sites where people (re)enact their identities by engaging in activities that impart meaning to such spaces. In this study of immigrant students, the figured worlds are the home/family culture (micro) setting and the larger/dominant culture (macro), as these relate to identity formation.

But since identities are not persistent or fixed, individuals gravitate and/or are recruited into certain figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998; Urrieta, 2007). When new

identities are formed, characters construct new realms in which to act out their new identities. The coexistence of identities is in constant development and renegotiation according to circumstances and lived experiences. In figured worlds, our agency and power dynamics shape behaviors and perceptions of events, self and others. As explained by Monzó and Rueda (2009) in their study with fifth graders passing (based on Goffman's idea of passing) for English speakers, students' behaviors of pretending they understood and spoke English fluently can be explained as an agentic behavior in the presence of discriminatory or subtractive school practices. The students were aware that English had more prestige than their native language and opted for recognition and inclusion at the expense of content learning and the ability of performing school tasks. (Researchers found out that many times the passing students did not understand the instructions and/or the content.)

When students shift identities or accommodate their behavior to the circumstances (school vs. home), they are refiguring their worlds. They are deciphering their past to make sense of the present. Their History-in-Person (H-I-P) (Holland et al., 1998) comes into play. H-I-P refers to peoples' social histories that, like social identifications, are realized personally. According to Holland et al. (1998), people "do bring their history to the present" (p. 46) and this helps them make sense of their interactions with others, affording them some control and agency . H-I-P is relevant for the analysis and understanding of immigrant students' identity formation given their socio-historical context in the United States, as explained earlier in this literature review. I argue that the different realms that contribute to Latino immigrant students' identity formation (language, culture, family relations, new residence, legal status) intersect their current

life experiences, because not including these is negating their unique and complex existence. Latino immigrant students are not a tabula rasa devoid of experiences, their H-I-P at the intersection of current circumstances, directs their actions and behavior in the present.

All beings are socially constructed through powerful discourses and their artifacts important in figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998). Holland et al. define artifacts as "the means by which figured worlds are evoked, collectively developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful" (p. 61). These discourses and categories of the dominant spheres are inscribed upon people interpersonally and institutionally. The artifacts present in the schooling of immigrant students can take the form of curricula, program placement, friends/non-friends, (in)admission to certain programs or classes, race, language, skin color, and also discourses like "English is important" (Urrieta, et al., 2011). Artifacts act as indices of positioning. Individuals learn to identify these artifacts and to use them for identifying themselves and others. According to Holland et al. (1998), in figured worlds signs and symbols take shape within and grant shape to the co-production of activities, discourses, performances and artifacts" (p. 51). Figured worlds exist as people make sense of self and others. Both identity and figured worlds are dynamic. Consequently, artifacts are not unitary or static, but can have different meanings in different figured worlds.

In this section, I have explained that identities are dynamic, co-constructed and relational. We come to the conclusion that individuals are in constant dialogic interaction, which directly influences identity formation. Individuals, then go through a process of internalization and accept, deny or negotiate (we do all three) how others position them

and how one chose to author oneself (Holland et al., 1998; Urrieta, 2011). This positioning and internalization process is (re)created every time in every one of our figured worlds. In their study with youthful offenders attending post-secondary educational courses in prison, Urrieta et al. (2011) found out that the inmates were able to re-author themselves thus denying their positioning as inmates. Their hybrid figured worlds of prision/collge allowed them to negotiate different identities (student/inmate) allowing them to re-author themselves in new agentic ways. Issues of power, however, intervene in the positioning of actors. Artifacts also play a key role in positioning. Their meaning is varied according to time and context, and in relation to geographical place (Dobly & Cornbleth, 2001). Thus, we are constantly participating in figured worlds mediated by time, context and location. This self-authoring allows us, through dialogue, to author the world in a way that is unique to us due to our unique H-I-P. These new identity(ies) help us mediate our behavior, from which agency emerges.

Next, I discuss other theoretical frameworks I employed for this study where I draw from Critical Race theory, LatCrit theory and Chicana feminist epistemology.

CRT and LatCrit Theories in Education

Race continues to be a strong construct in everyday U.S.A. Our understanding of race is based on a concept of *whiteness*. Conceptual categories of whiteness, such as "school achievement," "intelligence," or "middle classness" become normative categories of what it means to be White in the U.S. (Ladson-Billings, 1998; original emphasis), while all other nonwhite categories (i.e., gangs, brown skin, hip-hop dancers) become the marginalized and de-legitimized categories of the Other. Whiteness has meaning and

value in our society, and it is a strong signifier of what is legitimate and what is not (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Mari Matsuda (1991) has defined critical race theory as:

> …the work of progressive scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination (p. 1331).

Critical Race Theory's (CRT) basic propositions are 1) racism as ordinary, not aberrational in U.S. society; 2) "interest convergence," stating that racism advances the interest of white elites, both psychically and materially; 3) races as products of social thought and relations, which can be invented, manipulated or retired when convenient; 4) differential racialization, that is, the shift over time of popular images and stereotypes of minority groups; and 5) unique voice of color, which declares that minority status brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Sólorzano (1998) explains that CRT seeks to challenge the monovocal discourse and traditional paradigms on race, gender, and class; focuses and examines the effects of race and racism from the perspective of people of color; and provides a guide for transformation. Critical race theory stands on the notion that racism is normal in U.S. society (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). As stated by Villenas and Deyhle (1999, p. 437),

> In essence, a CRT frame entails an analysis of the totality of racism and the interplay of the macro (anti-immigrant xenophobia, anti-bilingualism, anti-affirmative action, the job ceiling) and the micro (school policies and organization) in the lives of Latino children and families. And as critical race theorists assert, uncovering racism also means proposing radical action for change.

Specifically, Critical Race Theory is a framework that can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism become lived experiences for immigrants in their constant negotiation in a new environment. CRT is concerned with the relationship among race, racism and power with an activist dimension that aims for transformation, not just assertion (Solórzano, 1998). Moreover, because CRT acknowledges different categories within the individual –what crits call intersectionality– it acts as a strong foundation in this study for analyzing the multiple forms of oppression unique to my participants (i.e., race, gender, national origin, legal status, English language skills). Additional layers of difference, privilege, and marginalization emerge when we consider that the experiences of immigrants vary according to race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, language, and immigration status, among others.

Latina/Latino critical theory (LatCrit) is complementary to CRT (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). LatCrit and CRT are very similar in that both challenge dominant ideologies such as colorblindness and meritocracy, showing how these tenets can operate against people of color and be an advantage to the majority group (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano, 1998). However, LatCrit theory centers[17] a progressive sense of a coalitional Latino/Latina pan-ethnicity (Valdés, 1996). Indeed, traditionally race relations in the U.S. are understood primarily from the black/white binary, which by definition limits conversations to the experiences of African Americans and Whites (Solórzano, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Hidalgo, 1998). Omitting Latinos' race-related histories unique to their intersectionality becomes extraordinarily damaging since it contributes to their marginalization and stigmatization. A LatCrit framework is

[17] bell hooks (2000) talks about bringing relevant issues form the margin to the center, which opens the floor for deep conversations.

paramount for the analysis of this study, because it addresses issues embedded in the lives of immigrants such as language, immigration status, race, ethnicity, culture, identity, accent, surname and phenotype (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2005).

Solórzano (2001, 1998) outlines five themes that form the basic perspectives or defining elements of a critical race theory in education, which served as my guide for this study. I agree with Delgado Bernal (2002) when she says that these same elements form the basis for both CRT and LarCtit, and I explain how these perspectives guided my study. Because CRT "is anything but uniform and static" (Solórzano, 1998, p. 123), I used as many of the five themes as possible to examine the interrelation of residency status, ethnic identity formation and schooling among elementary age, children of immigrants and undocumented mothers from Mexico and Central America in mixed legal status families.

1. The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism: CRT departs from the premise that race and racism are central, endemic and a fundamental part of explaining how U.S. society functions (Yosso, 2005). I argue that for the vast majority of immigrants from Mexico and Central America, coming to the United States represents their first encounter with blatant racism. In Latin American countries, where the majority of the population belongs to the same race, ethnicity and class are intermixed in general. Discrimination and oppression for the majority of Latin Americans is based primarily on class or phenotype. Race plays a strong role, however, for people of indigenous decent (Urrieta, 2003; Machado-Casas, 2009) in both their home countries and the US. Indigenous immigrant parents have experiences of racial discrimination and transmit

survival skills to their children in the US (Machado-Casas, 2009). Immigrants' intersectionalities (i.e., class, surname, phenotype, accent, race) are exactly what make them different and marginalized from the norm in this country. Thus, CRT provides a powerful tool to understand how the subordination and marginalization of immigrant children and families is created and maintained in the U.S. (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).

2. *The centrality of experiential knowledge:* Epistemologically, CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of people of color and marginalized group members is legitimate, valid, and critical to understanding and analyzing their racial subordination. CRT draws explicitly on the lived experiences of people of color because "stories provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting" (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998, Yosso, 2005). Methodologically, both CRT and LatCrit employ storytelling to integrate the voices of often ignored groups. Through storytelling, giving voice or naming one's reality, CRT intends to a) disrupt the one-story rhetoric; b) avoid self-condemnation and internalization of stereotypic images that society constructs about minorities; and c) affect the oppressor by making public the realities of the oppressed. Thus, I aim to give "voice" to their stories to disrupt the conceptualization of race that Latino immigrant children and families are subjected to by institutions and the general rhetoric.

3. *The challenge to dominant ideology:* CRT challenges white normative discourse and practices "that educational institutions make towards objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity" (Yosso, 2005, p 73). Because racism disempowers individuals and can lead to self-doubt (Sólorzano, 1998), it is important to let Latino immigrant children and families know that their practices and

traditions of the home, their ethnic identity, their culture, and immigrant history are relevant. In the words of Matsuda (1989),

> This multiple consciousness I urge lawyers to attain is not a random ability to see all points of view, but a deliberate choice to see the worlds from the standpoint of the oppressed. That world is accessible to all of us. We should know it in its concrete particulars. We should know about our sister carrying buckets of water up five flights of stairs in a welfare hotel…these details and the emotions they evoke are relevant and important as we set out on the road to justice (p. 9).

Thus, by offering alternative narratives from intersectional individuals like immigrant students from Mexico and Central America and those of their families, we give them the means to be heard and appreciated; we give them the chance to challenge deficit-informed research that silences, ignores and distorts epistemologies of people of color (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Yosso, 2005).

4. *The commitment to social justice:* CRT is committed to social justice and offers a liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression (Matsuda, 1991). Immigrants' perspectives and multiple consciousnesses (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Hidalgo, 1998; Matsuda, 1989) inform us to do justice to a broader range of people and avoid the simplification of the immigrant experience. With CRT/LatCrit frames we are able to analyze that immigrant children's school success or failure is not the result of the individual alone, but the orchestration of the system as a whole (i.e., tracking, English-only practices, or segregated schools). A CRT lens will allow me to analyze immigrant children's schooling experiences, taking into consideration the racism behind the anti-immigrant, anti-Latino xenophobia of this country and the exploitation of transnational labor and migration (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).

5. *The interdisciplinary perspective:* Addressing the schooling experience of immigrant children from Mexico and Central America necessitates a wider vision that is only possible through the incorporation of different disciplines. CRT goes beyond disciplinary boundaries to analyze race and racism from both past and present contexts, drawing from a variety of fields (Yosso, 2005). Hidalgo (1998) identifies the various contextual dimensions relevant in the lives of Latino groups in the U.S. as sociohistorical, socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural citizenship. I add, however, the legal aspect of residency status and the physiological well-being of Latino immigrants as other crucial contexts to review.

Finally, it is not my intention to frame the immigrant experience under a fatalistic light of only pain, suffering, and uncertain futures. After all, immigrants recreate their lives in their new country (Hagan & Rodriguez, 2002), and many I know live happy, plentiful lives. Many critical theorists (See Villenas, & Deyhle, 1999; Solórzano, 2001, 1998; Hidalgo, 1998; Valdés, 1996; Vásquez, et al., 1994; Soto, 1997) have given testimony to the cultural strengths and assets of Latinos in the U.S. Through CRT and LatCrit lenses, I too want to unveil stories of resilience, resistance, success and perseverance of Mexican and Central American immigrant families and their children.

The notion of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) is particularly relevant for this study, because it deems the knowledge and cultural capital of people of color as valid and relevant for analyzing their oppression and racialization. Yosso (2005) challenges Bordieu's notion of cultural capital[18] because this interpretation uses "White, middle class culture as the standard and therefore all other forms of 'culture' are judged

[18] Yosso (2005) explains Bordieu's cultural capital as an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society.

in comparison to this 'norm'" (original emphasis, p. 76). In other words, there are already specific forms of knowledge, practices and traditions that are valued by privileged groups of society and are used to compare cultural expressions and practices of all other groups. Using Bordieu's notion of cultural capital, the particular cultural capital (i.e., Spanish, schooling in home country), social capital (i.e., networks, connections), and economic capital (i.e., jobs, materials possessions) of Mexican and Central American immigrant families and children will be disqualified. Therefore it is important to use theories and frameworks that center on the knowledges of ways of knowing of communities of color when studying such communities. Yosso's (2005) outline of community cultural wealth identifies at least six forms of capital including aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital.

Using a Chicana/Mexicana immigrant lens, I will explain some of Yosso's (2005) forms of community cultural wealth and how this approach informs my study on Latino immigrant families and children. Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future amid real barriers such as lack of English skills or undocumented status. In a pilot study with an undocumented immigrant mother of Mexican origin, Aurora, my informant, shared with me her dream of possibilities beyond her then current circumstances,

> A la niña le gusta mucho la escuela. Quiere aprender el inglés, le pone mucho empeño. Al niño igual, le gusta su escuela, le gusta el inglés. Entonces es lo que me hace que no me eche pa' tras. [*My daughter likes school very much. She wants to learn English; she is very dedicated. My youngest son is the same way; he likes English. This is what motivates me to persevere.*]
>
> … los quisiera ver estudiados, bien preparados, este, y pues que sean felices. Que no estén siempre con el temor o el pendiente de nada. [... *I'd*

like for them to be well prepared and educated, and happy. I don't want for them to fear or worry about anything.]

Linguistic capital refers specifically to the ability of immigrants to communicate in a language other than English and the ability of developing bilingual skills. Lucy Tse (1996) uses the term *language brokers* for children who "interpret and translate between culturally and linguistically different people and mediate interactions in a variety of situations including those found at home and school" (p. 226). Language brokering may help immigrant children learn the values, behaviors, lifestyles and language of the dominant culture. This ability provides children with new links in their social network which represent sources of knowledge seldom available to monolingual children (Vásquez et al., 1994). Yet this skill does not have institutional value for Latino immigrant children that attend schools on the wrong side of the tracks. Bilingualism among low SES Latino children is seen as a deficit as evidenced by the propagation and implementation of transitional bilingual programs in Title I schools. One must note, however, that this very same skill is celebrated, sought after and encouraged through dual language programs and parent-funded Spanish teachers in high SES schools. Yosso (2005) defines social capital as networks of people and community resources and navigational capital as the skills of maneuvering social institutions. As such, translation and interpretation show linguistic capital intermixed with social and navigational capitals because these skills involves recourse to multiple sources of linguistic and cultural knowledge in order to create meaning, negotiate a task, or solve a problem (Vasquez et al., 1994).

Yosso (2005) defines familial capital to those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition (in Delgado Bernal's sense, 1998, 2002). Familism is a key aspect for Latino immigrants that can be constructed as a defining characteristic (or intersection) for the group. Hidalgo (1998), Valenzuela (1999) Falicov (2002), Valdés (1996), Yosso (2005), Soto (1997), Boehm (2012), and a host of other critical theorists have identified the family at the center of Latino immigrants' life as opposed to the individualistic Eurocentric view. Without the physical and emotional support of relatives close by (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006), or the financial means, Latino immigrant families sometimes depend on other immigrant friends or neighbors for providing childcare or picking up children after school. These practices and relationships also connect children with their ancestry, traditions, heritage and customs providing a pillar for their emotional well-being and a healthy sense of self and family pride (Soto, 1997; Yosso, 2005; Boehm, 2012). Hidalgo (1998) adds that,

> "Research that is conceptualized on the extended family model begins to expand the norm so that Latino family organization is not seen as deficit, but as a strength and resource to educators who must begin to see grandmothers, aunts, uncles, and other extended family members as valid relatives of the family and the child" (p. 109).

As such, the family organization of Latino immigrant children may not always be the typical Eurocentric, nuclear family model of two parents and two children, but composed of their nuclear family *plus* extended (non)family members. The explanation above allows us to see the overlapping of familial and social capitals because these "forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).

Resistant capital refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (Yosso, 2005). In my study, I unveil Mexican and Central American immigrant practices that resist racism by maintaining and nurturing various forms of cultural wealth (i.e., ethnic identity formation, knowledges and practices of the home). Two of my sub-questions address this area:

- How do children in mixed status immigrant families negotiate the tensions that migration and (un)documented status can engender?
- How do immigration experiences foster agency among undocumented mothers from Mexico and Central America?

Next, I give a brief introduction to feminist theory and discuss important tenets associated with Chicana feminist epistemology that pertain specifically to how I approach this study.

Chicana Feminist Epistemology and Chicana/Mexicana *feminista* Pedagogies

In its beginnings, feminist theory emerged from privileged, schooled, white women of upper- and middle-class backgrounds seeking re-imaging of sexist gender roles, but neglected to include the experiences of women and men who live on the margin, people of color whose experiences were not deemed relevant to their movement (hooks, 2000). This group wanted social equity with men of their class and were the developers of theory in the absence of women of other races and social classes.

Women of color were not invited to be part of the movement as associates, but as mere informants of what happened to them almost in anecdotal form (hooks, 2000). White women talked about "common oppression" and thought they were fighting for all women when their agendas did not look at the problematized reality of women from other

groups who might have not shared the same problems and views. White women patronized and were condescending with women of color, believing the emphasis on social equality was a universal concern (hooks, 2000).

Feminism is a battle to end sexist oppression from a collective as well as individual stance. Feminists call for the review of systems of domination and their own role in their maintenance and domination. It does not privilege women over men as poor men are also oppressed (hooks, 2000). It does not aim to benefit solely a particular race or class. In general, an essential tenet of feminist research that is quite relevant to me is the fact that feminist researchers generally consider personal experiences not only to be a valuable asset in their line of research, but some say needed as part of the research itself (Delgado-Bernal, 1998). McRobbie (1991, p. 75) declares that "Our own subjectivity can often add to the force of research, just as our precise political position will inflect our argument this way or that, as will our private fascinations, our personal obsessions, and our odd erotic moments." The voice and agency of the researcher is not value free (Glesne, 2011).

A Chicana feminist epistemology, explains Delgado Bernal (1998), offers a standpoint that borrows from endarkened feminist epistemologies in the unique life experiences of Chicanas. In particular, Chicana feminist epistemology aids in my analysis of this study as it places Chicanas at the center as "speaking subjects" who can shed light into the knowledge produced by their own experiences and to the significant differences of structural opportunities they face compared to males (including Chicanos) and White women. This epistemological orientation is grounded on the sociohistorical experiences of Chicanas and their communities (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Chicana feminist ways of

knowing and understanding bring to light lived experiences that are probably not visible from a Eurocentric standpoint. Like Black feminist thinking, Delgado Bernal (1998) challenges the Western assumptions of "objectivity" and "universal foundation of knowledge" (p. 555).

Delgado Bernal (1998) advanced for us the concept of "cultural intuition," similar to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) "theoretical sensitivity –the combination of the researcher's personal experience and professional experience, as well as the existing literature and the analytical research process itself. Particularly, I draw from Delgado Bernal's (1998, p. 7) notion of "cultural intuition," which "extends one's personal experience to include collective experience and community memory, and points to the importance of participants' engaging in the analysis of data." For Delgado Bernal, cultural intuition is informed by "ancestral wisdom, community memory, and intuition" (1998). Chicana feminist epistemology gives Chicano(a) scholars some freedom to interpret their research findings outside existing paradigms. Delgado Bernal claims that Chicano(a) scholars are restricted by cultural hegemonic domination in educational research, so this is a way of reclaiming their own subjugated knowledge. Thus, Chicana feminist epistemologies are grounded in the unique experiences of Chicanas. Delgado Bernal (1998) tells us that "A major tenet of cultural intuition and a Chicana feminist epistemology is the inclusion of Chicana research participants in the analysis of data" (p. 575). Similarly, I argue that adopting a Chicana/Mexicana immigrant epistemology will afford me the opportunity to take part in producing and validating knowledge for this

study about Latino immigrants. As an immigrant (mother)[19] of Mexican origin, my insider/outsider perspective (Villenas, 1996) affords me the opportunity to deeply analyze a collective experience by comparing and contrasting my participants' personal experience with my own in terms of our immigration journey as national origin and racial Others.

I draw on Chicana feminist Anzaldúa's teachings (1999). Anzaldúa celebrates la *facultad*, the ability to trust our sixth sense, the Coatlicue State, or a state of ambiguous liminal existence, and *mestiza* consciousness, or a consciousness that integrates multiple oppressions. According to Anzaldúa (1999), la *facultad* is

> the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant 'sensing,' a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings, that is, which feelings reside/hide. The one possessing this sensitivity is excruciatingly alive to the world. (original emphasis, p. 60)

La *facultad* is a sixth sense that one develops as a survival mechanism "that people, caught between the worlds, unknowingly cultivate" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 61). Anzaldúa asserts that people are forced to develop this faculty as a way to be alert to our surroundings and be able to protect ourselves. Anzaldúa passionately states that "confronting anything that tears the fabric of our everyday mode of consciousness and that thrusts us into a less literal and more psychic sense of reality increases awareness and la *facultad*" (original emphasis, p. 61). It is here that Anzaldúa's *facultad* and Delgado Bernal's concept of *cultural intuition* project certain parallelism that allows Chicana researchers to bring a unique perspective to the process.

[19] I became a mother after living in the U.S. for quite some years. I argue that my motherhood stance should be problematized differently than that of immigrant mothers that actually bring their children with them, or worse, leave them behind in their countries of origin.

Indeed, a similar argument could be made regarding immigrants from Mexico and Central America. These immigrants, conscious about themselves, are alert about and attentive to their surroundings. Perhaps it is because of the normalization of whiteness that we are fully aware of what we look like, how we speak, what we eat, or how we celebrate. Perhaps it is because of the internalization of stereotypic images of Latino immigrants that we are self-conscious. We utilize our "ancestral wisdom, community memory, and intuition" (Delgado Bernal, 1998) to make sense of a new environment or a new encounter. Together "cultural intuition" (Delgado Bernal, 1998) and *la facultad* (Anzaldúa, 1999) allow immigrants to sense danger in the form of discrimination and racism against oneself or against our own children. We become alert when asked, "Where are you from?" because of our accent. We have experienced oppression and subordination, not only here but also in our countries of origin. As such, we have learned to be cautious and defensive. But it is that sixth sense, Anzaldúa's Coatlicue State (1999), that helps us sort out a well- intentioned question from a malicious one; a friendly smile from a forced one; a genuine conversation to get to know each other from a interrogation session about how "you got here." This intuition or sixth sense allows us to identify unconscious racism (Solórzano, 1998) externalized in microaggressive comments such as, "You're so good. You speak English very well." Thus, *la facultad* is Latino immigrants' ability to create knowledge and theory out of everyday experiences (Elenes, et al., 2001) and encounters with the dominant culture and the master discourse.

I also draw from Anzaldúa's conceptualization of *mestiza consciousness* because it represents a state of perpetual transition, a constant state of mental *nepantlismo*[20]. Anzaldúa refers to *nepantlismo* as "torn between ways" to describe the state of ambiguity

[20] *Nepantla*, a toponymic from the Nahuatl language, means "in between" (*en medio de*).

and contradiction experienced by people that belong to more than one culture. Anzaldúa proposes that,

> The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be a Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode –nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (1999, p. 101)

Latino immigrants experience that state of ambiguity and contradiction (Villenas & Moreno, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994) when learning a different set of rules and rituals in their new country (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006). There are extensive examples in the literature that view Latino immigrant parents as "not caring" for the education of their children. Families are viewed as "holding back" their children (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999) for not helping them with homework, maintaining their Spanish or not attending school events. Although immigrant parents' reasons for not coming to school can range from feelings of *verguenza* (shame) for not speaking English to working two or three jobs, Latino immigrant parents' view of teachers is one of respect and trust, both personally and professionally. In other words, parents put their children in the hands of experts, and that is one reason why they don't question school practices, not because they "don't care." García Coll & Kerivan Marks (2009) in their longitudinal study with Cambodian, Dominican and Portuguese immigrant groups found out that Dominican parents expressed high educational and occupational aspirations for their children. Similarly, in their study with Latina mothers in South Texas, Cortez, Martinez, and Sáenz, (2013) found out that Latina mothers believe their responsibility in helping their children to be college ready was by providing emotional support and financial assistance. The authors

add,

> The Latina mother is very different than the "helicopter parent" (Somers & Settle, 2010). [Latina mothers] are not a hyper-sensitive parent who feels the need to be involved in, and seemingly in charge of, every aspect of the college application process or beyond, rather Latina mothers allow their child to navigate the college choice process with the close emotional support of family for the purpose of instilling in their child a sense of independence. (p. 20).

The above mentioned findings shift the construct that Latino parents "do not care" about their children's education. Latino parents' ways of knowing about schools and teachers are undervalued and criticized by institutions. Latino parents have a unique way to see and approach the world different than mainstream expectation and practices. Both approaches are valid, and we need to acknowledge both.

A *mestiza* consciousness is also about resilience and self/collective power (Elenes, et al., 2001). Latino immigrant families are very resilient in nature. Their inner strength may come from their dual frame of reference (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995b) or envisioning a better future for their children in this country, as my informant Aurora expressed to me. They are visionaries. Without the support of extended family members close by, Latino immigrants recreate their new networks of support. This mutual co-dependency provides to them not only material things and services (i.e., renting together, cooking for a group, childcare, driving each other to appointments, picking up other parents' children after school), but it is also a source of emotional support. One can argue that these are examples of self and collective power that emanates from Latino immigrants' *mestiza* consciousness in which they learn to cope with the contradictions of their new surroundings and societal expectations.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a brief historical account of Mexican Americans' struggles for educational equality in the United States as the basis to analyze current issues that impact the education of Mexican and Central American immigrant students especially given the context of Texas. The synopsis on Central America gives us relevant background information about the reasons people from these countries decided to migrate to the United States. The literature review on immigration studies gives us a parameter to understand some of the aspects related to the lives of Mexican and Central American immigrant groups. Some of these aspects, such as cultural flexibility (Sánchez, 2007), English language acquisition, legal residency status, national origin, race, gender and educational segregation have an impact on how these groups make sense of themselves in their new environment. Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefanic, 2001; Matsuda, 1989, 1991; Solórzano, 2001, 1998; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998, Yosso, 2005) and LatCrit (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) are appropriate frameworks for analyzing issues embedded in the lives of Latino immigrants because these lenses are primarily concerned with issues of race, injustice and unfair treatment. Particularly, I draw from Delgado Bernal's (1998) notion of "cultural intuition" and Anzaldúa's (1999) conceptualizations of *la facultad* and *mestiza consciousness.* Next, I explain the research methodology that I will utilize in this study to explore the relationship of the identity formation amongst Mexican and Central American immigrant children and the aforementioned key aspects for these groups (i.e., language, legal status) in relation to their schooling experiences.

III. RESEARCH METHDOLOGY

Research Overview

This qualitative study addresses the interrelation of residency status, ethnic identity formation and schooling among elementary age, children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America in mixed legal status families in Central Texas. I hope to shed light on the identity formation particular to children of immigrants as these manage a dual frame of reference in mixed status families in the US. I will also focus on the ways undocumented immigrant mothers help develop and/or suppress an ethnic identity while educating their children in the U.S. Furthermore, my research seeks to study how mothers and children in mixed status families negotiate the tensions that migrating can engender. As such, I hope my research will help fill the gap and support the efforts of other researchers interested in Latino immigrant children in U.S. schools. Most of the current literature on immigrant children centers on adolescents and young adults. I situate my research in the critical paradigm of social research.

My focus on immigrant families from Mexico and Central America with mixed residency status generates the overarching research question guiding this qualitative study: ***How do undocumented mothers and children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America construct self-understandings in relation to their ethnic identity and immigration experiences in mixed-legal status families?***

The study sub-questions are:

- How do children in mixed status immigrant families negotiate the tensions that migration and (un)documented status can engender?

- How do undocumented mothers' immigration experiences influence children's self identification and the development of an ethnic identity?
- How do immigration experiences foster agency among undocumented mothers from Mexico and Central America?

I entered the field with the following assumptions and understandings, based on the literature review on immigrants, identity production and figured worlds I provided in Chapter II.

1. That immigrant children and children of immigrants of Mexican and Central American origin maneuver through a racialized and stigmatized hybrid, figured world.
2. That immigrant parents hold an important role in the development or suppression of an ethnic identity in relation to their children.
3. That migration and (un)documented status plays a key role in the identity development and perceptions of the world of children of immigrants, in mixed status families.
4. That residency status impacts the schooling experiences of children in mixed status immigrant families.

In this chapter, I explain my methodological orientation, the data-collection tools for this study my positionality as a researcher, and finally, the data analysis of this study. The methods utilized in this study draw primarily from Critical Race theory and research with adolescents and young children. These methods include: 1) multimodal techniques that include collecting data through narrative and visual media; 3) group discussions and individual interviews with students as follow-up to multimodal techniques; 4) one-to-one oral history interviews with parents; and journal writing with parents. Informed by a Critical Race methodology (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, 2001), the methods listed above

intend to use my participants' experiential knowledge, at the intersection of other forms of subordination, as legitimate and central to understanding what this project intends to accomplish. The methodological tools I selected align with the tenet that there must be a mutual respect and appreciation for my participants, within the context of social justice efforts.

Qualitative Approach

My inclination to concentrate primarily on qualitative research methodology emerged from what I perceive to be the need to (re)tell, to understand others' stances and to make these public. Qualitative data provides the kind of in-depth analyses that lead me to the understanding of immigrant experiences that I sought to explore (Martens, 2005; Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic, non-manipulative approach to the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3), which consists of "a series of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). The researcher, thus, analyzes the series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, artifacts, recordings and notes to self. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. Qualitative methods allow the researcher an in-depth description of phenomena. According to Mertens (2005), constructivists view knowledge as socially constructed and maintain that a researcher should make an effort to comprehend the complexity of others' lived experiences from their viewpoints. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) explain that qualitative research involves the

studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials that describe an individual's life. Interpretivism "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of social life-world" (Crotty, 2003, p. 67).

Qualitative work is an approach to the social world that accepts its dynamic and living quality (Esiner, 1991), from an inductive rather than deductive analysis (Stake, 1995). This dynamic feature of qualitative research is particularly important to my study of the Latino immigrant experience because this is not static, as history shows. The experiences and perceptions of immigrants will continue to change in close relation to the ethos of reception of the dominant culture. Qualitative inquiry does not seek universals, invariable laws commonly sought in the hard sciences; thus "outcomes will be suggestive rather than conclusive" (Crotty, 2003, p.13).

Critical Paradigm

In social inquiry, a paradigm is a basic belief system or worldview that guides the researcher, not only in choices of method but in ontological and epistemological terms. A paradigm can provide a conceptual framework to make sense of the world. It guides and directs the researcher's thinking and action, which is also connected with a larger body of research in a particular field. The researcher's choice of paradigm not only informs the way in which the study will be approached in terms of data collection and analysis and presentation of the results, but it is also an admission of the researcher's openness about her ways of being (ontology) and her ways of knowing (epistemology). I situate my study methodologically in the critical paradigm.

Critical paradigm ontology in qualitative research can be realist, critical realist or historical realist (Martens, 2005).There can be multiple realities. Critical theorists believe that thought is mediated by historically constituted power relations, which are never neutral and are always embedded in context (Martens, 2005). Critical researchers seek the nature of reality in aspects of social justice, freedom, equity, dominant culture, dominated groups, oppression, power relations, hegemony, culture, gender and class, among other issues. Critical researchers try to explicate reality in terms of conflict and problematization, not just accepting the status quo. Critical theorists explain the reality of current issues based on what happened before, on historical situations, so that "reality" can be critically examined in terms of its role in perpetuating oppressive social structures and policies (Martens, 2005).

Critical researchers believe that knowledge of reality is socially and historically constructed via symbolic representation, such as language (Martens, 2005). Different scholars agree that the power of words and ideas, not the power of money or violent force, is one of the main engines of the critical paradigm to bring change (Freire, 1972). Language is central in the formation of subjectivities and subjugation. Regarding critical epistemology Marten (2005, p. 18) explains, "There are multiple ways of knowing; some ways are privileged over others." Epistemologically, critical theorists are also constructivists, who in order to know what they know, seek to emancipate the oppressed, the unprivileged, and the marginalized. The relation between researcher and participants is interactive and has value. The ideological critique and the praxis are developed in conjunction with participants to avoid dominant constructions of knowledge, which can promote inequities. In the critical paradigm, action and reflection are united and happen

at the same time. For Freire (1972), action and reflection were determinant to change the world: reflection without action was sheer verbalism; action without reflection was pure activism.

The study's foci on issues of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), empowerment, challenging dominant discourses (as they pertain to or ignore immigrant populations) aptly fits this body of thought and analysis. My research fits appropriately within the critical paradigm as it focuses on the power relationships between minority groups, such as the one represented by immigrants, and the dominant group in society. According to Freire, humans are actors in the world, not mere spectators. Thus, this study helps to debunk common believes that immigrant mothers are passive or conformist. The immigration experience varies by gender, age, time, context, and place at the intersection of history of the sending nation as well as of the host nation. The critical paradigm is linked with specific methods, such as counter storytelling and life histories, which most effectively heighten awareness of societal inequities. The narratives from immigrant mothers and children of immigrants in this study have the intention to add new understandings to the growing body of research on immigrant populations.

CRT, LatCrit and Chicana Feminist Methodology

> *Stories humanize us. They emphasize our differences in ways that can ultimately bring us closer together. They allow us to see how the world looks from behind someone else's spectacles. They challenge us to wipe off our own lenses and ask, "Could I have been overlooking something all along?"*
>
> Richard Delgado, 1989, p. 2440

Chase (2000) defines narrative inquiry as an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods –"all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by those who live them" (p. 651). One of the main claims for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives (Connelly & Clandini, 1990). Oral narrative has been part of people's lives through history. Subordinated groups have always told stories in songs, poems, letters, *corridos* (ballads) and verse about their own pain and oppression (Delgado, 1989). Narrative inquiry, an emergent type of qualitative inquiry, can serve both as a phenomenon (the story itself) and as a methodological tool that can be used to analyze and challenge dominant discourses (Delgado, 1989, 2000; Solórzano, 1998; Fernández, 2002; Yosso, 2005).

Epistemologically, CRT and LatCrit privilege the experiential knowledge of people of color and marginalized groups as critical ways of knowing and naming racism and others forms of oppression and subordination (Delgado, 2000; Solórzano, 1998; Fernández, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Similarly, Chicana feminist epistemology originates from the lived experiences of Chicana women themselves (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Methodologically, CRT, LatCrit, and Chicana feminist epistemology identify storytelling or "naming your own reality" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13), as important tools for achieving racial emancipation (Fernández, 2002). Stories provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling and interpreting. According to Delgado (1989), stories are essential tools for the survival and liberation of the storyteller because they are a means of psychic self-preservation, and as means of lessening their own subordination.

Fernández (2002) explains that narratives benefit the storyteller by 1) allowing the participant to reflect on his or her lived experience; 2) making public his or her account; 3) subverting the dominant story or the reality that is socially constructed by Whites; and 4) opening up the possibility of transformation and empowerment through individual conscious raising.

Critics (Bochner, 2001) of personal narratives, *testimonios*, "documents of life" (Plummer, 2001) and other types of narrative inquiries call into question the degree of the researcher's subjective interpretation embedded in these methodologies. Others (Stoll, as cited in Beverley, 2000) argue that such narratives may not always be "true" or "objective." Connelly & Clandini (1990) argue that the intersubjective quality of the inquiry is *the* central tenet of narrative. From CRT and LatCrit perspectives, stories or narratives are indeed mediated and constructed by the author, but that does not diminish the value of such stories as examples of racism and other forms of oppression (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005; Fernandez, 2002). There is no one complete, pure, true story waiting to be told (Crotty, 2003; Fernandez, 2002), or all-encompassing description (Delgado, 1998). Subjectivity in qualitative research is an essential element of understanding (Stake, 1995).

Issues of validity and trustworthiness are crucial factors in ensuring credible and sound research. In qualitative research, there are not techniques that guarantee validity the same way that positivist approaches do. However, there are techniques that can help establish credibility. "Member validation," or member checking, is a primary technique that can be used to ensure validity and trustworthiness. Olesen (2000) notes that feminist qualitative researchers address or worry about validity or "trustworthiness" in different

ways, depending on how the researchers frame their approaches (original emphasis, p. 251). Olesen adds,

> Those who disdain the positivistic origins of such techniques but nevertheless believe that there are ways of achieving validity that reflect the nature of qualitative work will seek out ways to establish credibility through such strategies as audit trails and member "validation," techniques that reflect their post-positivist views but that do not involve hard-and-fast criteria for according "authenticity" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Manning, 1997). (p.252).

Member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is a common tool utilized among qualitative researchers to assess if the description presented by the researcher corresponds to the account provided by the participants. The researcher cross-checks her work through member checks and audit trails. In writing up the narrative, the qualitative researcher must decide what form the member check will take. The researcher has to find a way in which her participants will review the material. For my study, I conducted member checks throughout the different stages of the research. During one-on-one interviews, I asked questions to make sure I understood the information being provided. Two of my participant mothers opted to also do journal writing to reflect on past experiences. Thus, the information in their journals served me as a way to expand and corroborate some of the information shared with me during one-to-one interviews. With the children, I was able to confirm information during the discussion and explanation of their quick notes and/or drawings. Subsequent meetings with participants allowed me to cross-check previous data.

In order to establish rapport with my participants, I adopted a casual and respectful approach to let them know that their stories are important. I explained the study in simple terms emphasizing that I think it is important for everybody to learn

about immigrant experiences. Since I worked in the school, I also explained that the study had nothing to do with the school and it would not affect them or their children in any way, whether they decided to participate or not. Thinking that parents could have been hesitant, I shared with them about a previous study that I conducted with an undocumented mother (a pilot study) and that her identity was confidential. I said that our meetings were not formal interviews, but more like conversations about our immigrant experiences, as I was willing to share with them my story.

I conducted two to four life history interviews with five parents. Solórzano and Yosso (2001) argue that counter-stories can serve four theoretical, methodological, and practical functions. The purpose of these interviews was to learn about their life back in their home countries; their motivations to migrate to the United States; their experiences as immigrant families; and their traditions and *creencias* (beliefs) they practice at home that may support and/or suppress an ethnic identity among their children. Some of the topics that were covered during these meetings were: about self, education, parenting, literacy at home, immigrating to the United States, volunteering at school, and traditions of the home country. In my proposal, I had planned to conduct two to three focus group interviews with immigrant mothers to discuss further some of the emerging themes from individual life history interviews. However, parents expressed to me (individually) that they did not want to share their experiences with other parents. Thus, our conversations and meetings became sacred and totally confidential. My aim was that through these group meetings parents could see "the possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position" (Solórzano and Yosso, p. 475). As empowerment tools, these conversations could have had the potential to liberate the

storyteller because stories can be the means of lessening people's own subordination according to (Delgado, 1998), and the possibility of transformation and empowerment through individual conscious raising (Fernández, 2002). More studies are needed with groups of (un)documented immigrant mothers to further analyze the liberating potential expressed by Delgado (1998).

Researching with Children

Constructs on children and childhood have changed throughout time. Although still a perspective in transition, children are no longer seen as passive consumers of an adult society. Researching *with* children and seeing them as central informants of their own life world, rather than objects of inquiry, is an emerging area (Christensen & James, 2008). According to James et al. (1998), centuries ago children were seen as developmentally immature and incomplete. Three major socialization models have informed the way children have been constructed through time: 1) developmental ―the process of "becoming," incomplete, immature and irrational beings, Darwinian evolutionism; 2) normative socialization ―child as passive receptor that can be molded by positive or negative stimuli; 3) social constructionist perspective ―child as social actor that simultaneously acts on her environment while also is being shaped by it (Freeman & Mathison, 2009).

From this constructionist view on childhood has emerged a child-centered perspective called the "new social studies of childhood" (James et al., 1998). This interdisciplinary movement recognizes childhood for its unique qualities; views children as fully formed and complete individuals; views children as autonomous subjects rather

than members of their family; and with rights of their own to be protected and capable of voicing their opinion (Brooker, 2001, cited in Freeman & Mathison, 2009). Although the shift in emphasis and ideology about children have significantly improved by recognizing them as the subjects rather than objects of research, the organization of social institutions continues (family and child-protection laws; school age-based classrooms) to influence how we think about and work with children.

James et al., (1998) describe four sociological conceptions of children that position them as active and meaningful participants in social life: the socially constructed child, where cultural beliefs play a strong role; the tribal child is viewed as having her/his own beliefs and practices, different from an adult's constructions of the world; the social structural child, a universal category present in all societies where macrostructures such as age and gender are given a new meaning; and the minority group child which views children as oppressed groups, powerless to shape an adult world in which they are required to participate. These conceptions about children inform current research with children. These four sociological perspectives are not static and separate categories, and often overlap on studies about children. Ultimately, researching with children is central to recognizing and respecting them as human beings (Roberts, 2008).

The researcher's perceptions of children are highlighted by the literature as an important element when working with children (Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Connolly, 2008; Christensen & James, 2008). Children's perceptions of adults are also a critical variable in researching with young populations as this may pose issues of power relation that may affect the findings (Connolly, 2008; Greene & Hogan, 2005). The way children have been socialized toward adults (i.e., being obedient or respectful in the presence of

adults; fearful or non-participatory in the presence of strangers) and the trust the researcher is able to build with the child are also aspects to be considered. As such, I took into account my relationship with participant children and vice versa, during the analysis phase.

This brief explanation about researching with children highlights the shift in children's positioning in research, and it also describes the sociological conceptions about children. The aforementioned socialization models and sociological conceptions about children inform my study with Latino children of immigrants. Like the new social studies of childhood (James et al., 1998), I believe that children are autonomous subjects whose ideas and opinions are important. The developmental model is based on an evolutionist view that disqualifies children's examples of agency. The normative socialization model indicates that children do not affect their environment. This study as a whole and my choice of methods in particular, speak of my belief of children as autonomous subjects capable of expressing their ideas independent of the adults in their lives. Freeman & Mathison (2009) remind us that all research should consider how the research findings benefit children, and not simply how it furthers adult interests and agendas. It is with this tenet in mind that I designed my study with children of immigrants. As stated earlier, there is very little research on the lives and experiences of young children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America.

El barrio y la escuela: Setting

My student participants in this study attend Vargas Elementary School (pseudonym) a Title I campus[21], in a Central Texas urban area where I was a school administrator for two years. The research study was conducted with children of immigrants of Mexican and Central American origin. While each area of Central City (pseudonym) has its unique characteristics, the east side of town is frequently considered a low-income, marginalized sector. Housing in the vicinity of the school that served as a source for my participants is situated in a low-income neighborhood. The houses have the appearance of needing major repairs such as a new roof, concrete patios and driveways or siding. One day coming to work after a rainy weekend, I saw an older man coming out of his house, watching every step carefully to avoid stepping on the mud all around the property. Although some houses have potted plants, tiny flower beds and small grassy areas, the majority have loose dirt and patchy areas of grass where vehicles are parked. People in the community rely on public transportation as evidenced by the number of bus stops throughout the neighborhood. It is very common to see people sitting in their front porches, tending to their vegetable gardens or chickens in their backyards, walking on the streets or waiting for the bus. Almost every morning, I saw an African American middle age man picking up trash on one of the main streets close to Vargas Elementary. On one hand he would hold a big plastic trash bag and on the other he carried a hand-held device to pick up the papers, wrappers, or empty cans. To me, his daily efforts were an example of his pride and care for the neighborhood that some residents have for the place they call their home.

[21] Title I schools are those that receive additional federal funding based on the number of students who receive free and reduced lunch.

The school playground is adjacent to a public track where it is common to see adults and children jogging and walking in the evenings. The park also has public restrooms and water fountains. A couple of years ago a kindergartner from Vargas Elementary found a syringe with a hypodermic needle while using the public restroom during recess time. As a matter of play, the little boy poked two of his classmates with the needle. The case attracted a lot of media attention. Luckily the incident did not have major health consequences for the children, and in response, the community volunteered to clean up the area every day for a couple of weeks after the incident. The clean-up crew found a daily average of three syringes with hypodermic needles. This background information is important because it describes some of the struggles the community faces daily as well as their involvement with the school.

Vargas Elementary School is the farthest campus to the east of the school district, neighboring with another school district in the area. Its proximity to the airport and to a water sanitation station provides regular doses of loud noise and pestilent smells familiar to all children and teachers in the school. According to the information published in 2008-2009 by the Texas Education Agency, the student body is 89.6% Hispanic, 8% African American, 1.6% White and >1% Native American and Asian/Pacific Islander. The school serves approximately 550 students in PK-6th grades of which 39.6% (203) are enrolled in the Bilingual/ESL program. The school has a mobility rate of almost 24%, meaning that within a school year about 132 children will withdraw from or enroll in the school. Students tend to transfer primarily from other eastside campuses or from the neighboring school district. Vargas Elementary has a high concentration of students considered economically disadvantaged (96.1% or 429) and at-risk for dropping out of

school (70.9% or 363). Some of the students at this neighborhood school live in houses while others live in apartment complexes nearby, and yet others come from Home & Family (pseudonym), a housing complex for homeless, abused women and their children.

The current principal was appointed seven years ago and has worked with the school district for over 25 years. The professional staff is composed of about 12 males and 28 females. In terms of teacher experience, the school is almost equally served by novice teachers (1-5 years: n=16) and by more veteran educators (over 20 years: n=12). In 2008-09, the school hired three new teachers (0 years) and eight had between 6-20 years of experience. About five of the senior staff has taught at Vargas Elementary for the majority of their careers. Teachers and nonprofessional personnel alike make public their sense of belonging and commitment to the school, the students and the community. One of the male teachers is active with the African American cemeteries and recent trails in the vicinity and organizes annual clean-up days, media releases and neighborhood meetings. Others make frequent home visits to take students to their homes or to meet with parents. While most families move a lot, there are a few that have stayed in the area for several generations. Senior professional staff has taught some of the parents of our current students and even a few grandparents. The lead reading specialist, with 36 years of service at Vargas Elementary, was the teacher of the current crossing guard, a man in his late-forties. Several members of the staff currently live or have lived in the community, or have relatives that live in the area. Table 1 shows a more detailed demographic picture of the student population at Vargas Elementary School in relation to the school district and the State of Texas.

2008-2009 Academic Excellence Indicator System Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009)			
	Vargas Elementary	**Central Texas School District**	**State of Texas**
African American	8.4% (43)	11.7%	14.2%
Hispanic	89.6% (459)	58.8%	47.9%
White	1.6% (8)	25.8%	34%
Native American	0.2% (1)	0.2%	0.4%
Asian/Pac. Islander	0.2% (1)	3.4%	3.6%
Designated Limited English Proficient (LEP)	41.2% (211)	29.2%	16.9%
Enrolled in Bilingual or ESL Program	39.6% (203)	28%	16%
Enrolled in Gifted & Talented Program	3.7% (19)	6.3%	7.5%
Enrolled in Special Education	6.1% (31)	9.3%	9.4%
Economically Disadvantaged	96.1% (429)	62.7%	56.7%
Designated At-Risk	70.9% (363)	57.4%	48.3%
Mobility (2007-2008)	23.8% (98)	23.4%	19.8%

Table 1: Student Population Information

My decision to select Vargas Elementary as my research site is based on my knowledge of the community and my familiarity with the teachers at the school. I have gained entry into the site because of my various roles with the school district that span 20 years. About 14 years ago, when I was a bilingual kindergarten teacher, I was asked to train teachers at Vargas Elementary on literacy practices for bilingual PK and K students. More recently, as a district-level curriculum/administrative consultant, I collaborated with the administration of the school for three years and I also worked directly with the upper grade teachers. My job as an administrator at the campus gave me more access to children and families. These interactions with parents led me to choose Mexican and Central American immigrant families and their children at Vargas Elementary School as collaborators for this study.

Las madres y los niños: **Participants**

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling. According to Patton (1990), the selection of *information-rich cases* allows the researcher to concentrate the study on the issues that are of central importance to the research (original emphasis). Purposeful sampling requires a criterion to select participants that will directly reflect the purpose for the study. According to Creswell (2009) purposefully selecting participants or sites best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. Provided that I wanted to study immigrant families and the topic of immigration may be sensitive to some people, I decided to use a snowball or network purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990; Creswell, 2009, 2007). Snowballing is the strategy that identifies participants that can provide rich information, who then could refer other participants to be in the study. Participants already in the study thus recruit other participants from their network of friends or relatives. I selected the snowballing technique because it can be difficult to access families willing to share their immigrant experience and also to protect family privacy. Through my experience, I am aware that undocumented families tend to know each other's situations. I started with one participant mother, Maria, who referred to me two other mothers, Rosa and Erika. Later, through every day interactions with families at school, I met Mariana and Elizabeth.

I decided to work with immigrant mothers because it is more common to see and interact with them at school on a day-to-day basis than it is with fathers. I anticipated the process to be easier for me to approach mothers because we share similar identifiers: women, mothers, Spanish speakers, Mexican, with young children, among others. Initial

meetings were conducted with each mother as a way to introduce myself and initial screening for immigrant criteria. At this meeting, I also shared some of my background as a way of establishing rapport and building trust. Meetings were conducted in Spanish, which was the mothers' native language. The table below shows the demographic information of my mother participants.

Demographic information from mother participants						
Name	Age	Country of Origin	Marital Status	Family composition	Year of arrival to the US	Schooling
Elizabeth	33	Honduras	married in Honduras, but separated; single mother in the US, separated from the father of her US children	In Honduras: 1 daughter age 15, two sons ages 13 and 11 In the US: 2 sons ages 7 and 0.9	2000	technical trade in Mexico (seamstress)
Erika	33	Mexico	married	3 sons ages 13, 8 & 5; husband	2000	6th grade in Mexico
Rosa	29	Honduras	married	1 son age 7, 1 daughter age 4, husband	2001	high school in Honduras
Maria	34	Mexico	married	1 son age 11, 2 daughters ages 7 and 1; husband	2000	technical trade in Mexico (hair stylist)
Mariana	28	Mexico	separated from daughter's father; living together with a new boyfriend	1 daughter age 8; boyfriend	1997	11th grade in the US

Table 2. Demographic Information from Mother Participants

Participant children were selected through my participant mothers. I started with two 7-year olds (Beto and Silvia) whose mothers were part of my study. I met with Jacquie, another 7 year-old, at the request of her mother. They were experiencing the deportation of Jacquie's father. Interviewing *a los más chiquitos* (the youngest ones) was very uplifting. I appreciated

their innocence and spontaneity. They were honest and open. They made me wonder the point or age at which we become self-conscious about what we share with others. At the same time, it was surprising to see their knowledge about topics not common for a typical child their age such as about the border or having *papeles* (legal papers). First graders were however a bit timid and their responses were limited. I found myself talking more than listening. The girls were more open and did not need much preamble; whereas Beto was more reserved and responded with short answers or by nodding his head.

The young students' reserve indicated to me that perhaps I needed to recruit older students for my study. I met with Dulce (3rd grader) at the request of her mother. This coincided with my intention to interview older children. Dulce was experiencing the deportation of and reunification with her stepfather. Her mother thought that talking with school personnel would help her daughter[22]. Dulce's cousin, Betty (7 years old), joined us during our second meeting. Betty's contribution turned out to be very rich and added depth to Dulce's account. Interviewing both girls together indicated to me that a focus group approach was probably a more comfortable environment for children. Thus, I recruited three fifth graders.

I met for four times with fifth graders Juan, Angela and Mónica. I used a literacy-based approach to gather data about their experiences related to immigration. Juan's mother, Lupita, was one of the cafeteria monitors at Vargas Elementary. I shared with her about my study and she agreed for Juan to work with me. Lupita also suggested I invite her niece Angela (also a student at Vargas) to be part of my study. After getting

[22] The school counselor at Vargas Elementary was a White woman who did not speak Spanish. Mariana, Dulce's mom, though that in order for her daughter to express herself, she needed to do it in the language she was more comfortable with, Spanish. I gained Mariana's trust while helping Dulce due to her frequent visits to the nurse.

permission from her mother, Angela joined the group. Mónica joined the group for our second and third meetings. I had met Mónica's mother a year prior when they had just moved to the neighborhood and she came to the school to enroll two of her children. She seemed so sincere and open that although we have just met, I ventured to mention my study. She immediately agreed and added, "Venga a nuestra casa para que sepa en donde vivimos" (Come to our house so you know where we live.) She also mentioned being proud of being Mexican and of speaking Spanish. This short conversation showed me her pride in her ethnic heritage, something that also became evident in Mónica's data. Unfortunately, I was not able to work with Monica's mother because she worked more than one job and it was difficult for her to make time to meet with me. The table below shows the information of my children participants.

Children's Information					
Name	**Gender**	**Age**	**Grade Level**	**Family's country of origin**	**Related to a mother in this study**
Beto	M	7	1st	Honduras and Mexico	Yes; Rosa
Silvia	F	7	1st	Mexico	Yes; María
Jacquie	F	7	1st	Mexico	No
Betty	F	7	1st	Mexico	No
Dulce	F	8	3rd	Mexico	Yes; Mariana
Juan	M	10	5th	Mexico	No
Angela	F	10	5th	Mexico	No
Mónica	F	10	5th	Mexico	No

Table 3. Children's Information

Participant mothers and parents of the children participants were informed of the study through the consent form which indicated the purpose and duration of the study as well as the measures that were taken to ensure confidentiality. Due to confidentiality

issues and to fully protect my participants, I requested the IRB committee for a signature waiver.

Data-collection Tools

Proponents of the new social studies of childhood (Christensen & James, 2008), concerned with children being seen as less than adults, assert that conducting research with children does not necessarily entail adopting different or particular methods. However, others (Greene & Hogan, 2005) suggest that "the researcher must be open to use the methods that are suited for children's level of understanding, knowledge, interests and particular location in the social world" (p.8). Taking this into consideration and given the complexity of my research topic, I decided to use a multimodal approach and a literacy-based approach to engage children in conversation. I also held one-to-one meetings with children and mothers. Finally, at the suggestion of Rosa, one of my participant mothers, I gave mothers the opportunity to write their memories and reflections in a journal. Mothers selected their own journal from a variety of pretty journals with colorful images that I was able to purchase thanks to a small grant. Only Rosa and María shared with me their entries. Erika declined the offer saying she did not want her children finding her journal and reading about her experiences. The chart below shows the methods and sources of data that I employed with each participant.

Data Collection Chart			
Methods	**Sources of data**	**Participants**	**Number of meetings**
Interviews	Individual interviews	Children (4)	1 to 3
	Focus groups: literacy meetings	Children (3)	4
	Life history interviews	Individual parents (5)	2 to 4
Multimodal techniques	Literature reviews & discussions Children's drawings, narratives and quick notes	Children (3)	4
Journal writing	Journals	Mothers (2)	■

Table 4. Data Collection Chart

Multimodal Method

A multimodal method (van Leeuwen, 2000) is that which employs a variety of data-collection tools. I employed an approach that is similar to the activities/practices that are common in elementary school. I collected data through listening and discussing children's literature, narrative, and visual media. Students were asked to express their ideas through narratives, quick notes, and drawings/pictures. van Leeuwen (2000) explains that a multimodal method can bring out how children use both pictures and words to interpret learning and to formulate their relation to objects, phenomena and experiences.

My meetings with Betty and Dulce were not literary-based. However, I used drawing as a collection tool and as a vehicle for the girls to expand their explanations. Their drawings allowed them to reflect in their common experience of visiting their grandmother in a detention center. When they explain their pictures to me, new data

emerged that was not shared before during the interviews. The pictures allowed me to confirm the girls' accounts of their experiences.

I held a total of four meetings with the fifth graders lasting between 45 and 60 minutes. We introduced each other, and I explained the format of our gatherings. We met after school in the public park behind the school. As part of our literature sessions, I started by reading a book with a topic related to migrating and the students had the opportunity to jot down brief notes during the reading. Then, we engaged in discussion about parts of the story or illustrations that were relevant to them. Students also produced some illustrations and quick writes/ notes while listening to the story. The final task was to draw an event that happened to them that was related to the stories we read. The children explained their illustrations to the group which provided another opportunity to further expand on the topics discussed. During the explanation, the other two children also interjected their ideas and asked questions. With *Amigos del otro lado* (Anzaldúa, 1997), I started with a picture walk of the book to spark the interest of the children. I then read the story and children made connections. We ended with a discussion of immigration-related topics. The major themes that emerged from my meetings with children through literature are: immigration knowledge, language, ethnic heritage and pride. Samples of children drawings and quick notes are included in Chapter 5.

I audio-recorded the discussion for later analysis, which allowed me to draw conclusions from the drawing in relation to the conversation with each child. For the drawing activity, I provided children with an assortment of art supplies such as pencils, drawing/sketching paper, different widths and colors of markers, crayons and color pencils. I was able to provide these art supplies to children and journals for mothers

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Drawing/Narratives

Authors Kendrick & McKay (2002) used drawing as a vehicle to analyze different modes to represent knowledge other than reading and writing in school. From a Vygotskian perspective, this study views "the critical role of drawing in young children's concept development, particularly because drawing engages children in language use and provides an opportunity for children to create stories" (p. 46). Kendrick & McKay (2002) found in their study of children's drawings, that the task created an opening for children to talk about school and their "underlives" (Goffman, 1961, cited in Kendrick & McKay, 2002) in a way that would have never occurred without the impetus of the drawing. The authors also argue that visual images are different in nature from words in their allusion to reality and the ways in which participants see themselves and can be seen by others. The procedure I followed is an adapted version of Kendrick & McKay's (2002) study that incorporates children literature. I used stories as a way to engage in conversation with children. I selected the tiles based on the themes that relate to my study, as described in the chart below.

Reading Selections			
Title	**Author**	**Themes**	**Format**
Going Home	Eve Bunting (1996)	Traveling to Mexico to visit parents' home country; returning	Picture book
Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del otro lado	Gloria Anzaldúa (1997)	Crossing the U.S-Mexico border in search of work	Bilingual picture book
From North to South/ De norte a sur	Colato & Cepeda, 2010	Undocumented immigration; immigration officers; reunification; deportation	Bilingual picture book
How Many Days to America: A Thanksgiving Story	Eve Bunting (1990)	Family migration to the U.S.; new immigrants	Picture book

Table 5. Reading Selections

Oral History Interviews

Oral history interviews were conducted with individual parents. My interest in employing oral narrative inquiry as a method of research stems from the understanding that narrative is a way of knowing. Kramp (2004) states that as a way of knowing, narrative enables the storyteller to organize the story told by linking events, perceptions and experiences. As noted by Taylor & Bogdan (1998).

> In stark contrast to structured interviewing, qualitative interviewing is flexible and dynamic. Qualitative interviewing has been referred to as nondirective, unstructured, nonstandarized, and open-ended intervening. We use the term *in-depth* interviewing to refer to this qualitative research method. By in-depth interviewing, we mean repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words. The in-depth interview is modeled after conversations between equals rather than formal question-and-answer exchange. (p. 88).

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) explain that people often order their memories around a series of stories marked by key happenings. As such, I used "key happenings" as a way to

start or inquire deeper into a story. These events, "or key happenings" were connected through time. Oral narrative was a critical data-collecting tool for my study because some of the topics I expected to cover would have not been apparent by only means of observation (i.e., immigration experiences, beliefs). I decided to conduct interviews because I felt strongly that face-to-face interaction was critical to engaging participants' narratives.

Some of the strategies that I employed to be fully aware of inequalities between participants and researcher were to prepare mentally for the interviews and meetings to be fully present; follow my intuition during the interview to stop or continue the conversation according to what I consider its natural flow; and set time aside (alone) at the end of each interview or meeting to jot down my thoughts as a way to exercise reflexivity. During the interviews/meetings I took minimal notes of what I consider relevant aspects. Following my cultural intuition, scholar knowledge and personal experience on the topic, I wrote isolated words or phrases, dates or "key happenings." Right after the interview, I expanded on these notes for later analysis. I also wrote down my impressions, thoughts, and own connections as a way to reflect on the event.

Following Oakley's (1981) feminist approach to ethnographic interviews, I presented my own identity in the process. By presenting my vulnerability, I intended to create a safe and intimate environment that lessens the unequal power dynamics between my participants and me, particularly with my mothers' group. An outcome of this approach is that it produces work that challenges prevailing stereotypes of the researcher and the participant. Aside from asking questions and guiding the conversation, I shared

knowledge, guidance, encouragement and my immigrant experience[23]. My investment and first-hand knowledge on the topic was inevitably part of the research. Guided by my *facultad* (Anzalúa, 1999) and cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998), I gave advice, guidance and encouragement to parent participants. I intended to use my knowledge, ability and experience in ways beneficial to my participants as a reciprocal way of supporting them through this process.

I conducted oral history interviews with parents in Spanish. Interviews took place in locations that were convenient for my participants and where they felt comfortable to share their stories. Oral history interviews lasted 30-60 minutes and were digitally recorded (with participant permission) for later transcription. I conducted these in a series of two to four interviews per person. Through the use of focused semi-structured interviews, I engaged my participants with general questions as well as with questions to deepen or clarify a specific area(s) mentioned by participants. According to Fontana and Frey (2000) semi-structured interviews lends themselves particularly well to such an ambience of trust and ease. As Fontana and Frey (2000) note, "gaining trust is essential to the success of the interviews and, once gained, trust can still be very fragile" (p. 655). A crucial part of gaining trust involves establishing rapport, that is, "the researcher must be able to take the role of the respondents and attempt to see the situation from their viewpoint, rather than superimpose his or her world of academia and perceptions upon them" (p.655). While I developed potential guiding questions, I fully relied on the flow of the interview and my *facultad* for direction. As described in the chart below, I also used probes to help participants deepen and/or expand on specific topics.

[23] In my pilot study with an immigrant mother, I provided her with school-related information that would benefit her children.

Interview Protocol with Immigrant Mothers			
Research Question: *How do undocumented mothers and children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America construct self-understandings in relation to their ethnic identity and immigration experiences in mixed-legal status families?*			
Sub-questions	**Focus**	**Interview Topic**	**Probing**
How do children in mixed status immigrant families negotiate the tensions that migration and (un)documented status can engender?	Past stories	Biographies	Tell me about yourself. Tell me about your life in your home country.
	Nuclear family	Family	How did you meet your spouse? How long have you been married? How many children do you have?
	Migrating to the U.S.	Life in the U.S.	What motivated you to migrate to the U.S.? How did you decide to leave your country? What ideas did you have about living in the U.S. before migrating? Have ideas changed? Tell me about your life in the U.S.
How do undocumented mothers' immigration experiences influence children's self identification and the development of an ethnic identity?		Ethnic identity	What do you share with your children about Mexico? Why? What do you remember as important experiences when you lived in home country? What do you want your child to learn about your home country? Why?
How do undocumented mothers' immigration experiences influence children's self identification and the development of an ethnic identity?	Heritage	Traditions	What celebrations/traditions from home country does your family celebrate? Tell me one thing that you miss the most about your home country. What things/traditions did you used to do in your home country that you wish you could do here in the U.S.?
	Self identification	Identity	How do you describe yourself? What things do you do that connect you with your ethnic identity?
How do immigration experiences foster agency among undocumented mothers form Mexico and Central America?			Tell me about your experience of coming to the US. Is there anything from your immigration experience that has helped you succeed?

Table 6. Interview Protocol

Data Analysis

According to Merrian (1998), data analysis is the complex process of making meaning out of the data going back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation. In qualitative research, data analysis is an ongoing process that involves continuous and systematic reflections about the data, which typically starts during the data collection phase (Creswell, 2009, 2003; Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Data analysis consists of inductive analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that, "Inductive analysis . . . begins not with theories or hypotheses but with the data themselves, from which theoretical categories and relational propositions may be arrived at by inductive reasoning processes" (p. 333). Lincoln and Guba go on to explain inductive analysis as having two main components: unitizing and categorizing. A researcher unitizes his or her data by searching for an element (phrase, sentence, paragraph) that is "heuristic" or "aimed at some understanding or some action that the inquirer needs to have or to take" (p. 345).

In order to be very attentive to every phase of my study, I used field notes as a way to capture different areas that assisted me in analyzing the data. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), “field notes are data that may contain some conceptualization and analytic remarks, but are limited in terms of depth of analysis” (p.123). Field notes were divided into the following categories: 1) descriptive notes: observations recorded on-the-spot that were very difficult to discern from an audio recording, such as, body language, mannerism or physical reaction; 2) analytical notes: more in depth notes that cannot be taken during an interview, but that aided in my analysis as I connected the data with

theoretical concepts; and 3) self-reflective notes: before, during, and after each interview or meeting, these notes represented my reactions, feelings and overall impression. Self-reflective notes were critical as my *facultad, mestiza consciousness* and cultural intuition guided and informed my analysis of the data. My own identity as a mother, educator, immigrant Mexicana, Spanish speaker informed my work. My background, positionality, cultural intuition, *facultad,* and *mestiza* consciousness invariably permeates my thoughts, my choice of lens and my *ganas* (willingness) to help others because these are intrinsic to who I am. As stated earlier, I conducted member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with participants to make sure my understanding of the data was accurate.

During the data collection phase, I used initial memos (Emerson et al., 1995) to start the preliminary identification of topics or categories guided by my cultural intuition, *facultad,* and *mestiza* consciousness. In my analysis of data, two things were critical. The first was my guiding question and sub-questions. I kept these in mind at each phase of open and focused coding (Emerson et al., 1995). Secondly, I also paid close attention to the emerging categories during focused coding as these were the basis for the main themes that later were identified in this study. According to Charmaz (2005), "Coding is the method of connecting data, issues, interpretations, data sources, and report writing" (p.451). The coding phase forces the researcher to define the action in the data statement. Coding refers to making comparisons, usually side by side placing data against data, data with categories, category with category. Coding is "active, immediate and short and focuses on defining action, explicating implicit assumptions, and seeing processes" (p.517).

I approached my data from a CRT, LatCrit and Chicana feminist stance to look for instances where people talked about power, for issues of racism and for times when Latino identity emerges as salient, or when being a Latino immigrant was central to the stories. This allowed me to identify general ideas present in the study. First, I transcribed into Spanish all individual and focus groups interviews with parents and children. The conversations with children were conducted in both English and Spanish and with mothers in Spanish only. Then, I translated all information into English. Next, I read throughout the data to get a general sense of the information. Because most of conversations with mothers and students were conducted in Spanish, I was able to work in depth with my data by transcribing it in Spanish, translating into English and then once again by checking the accuracy of my translations to make sure the message was being conveyed. A close friend who was born in Mexico and has lived in the US for more than 20 years, assisted me in checking my translations to make sure the meaning was intact. Another friend, who was born and raised in the US with a Latino background, assisted me by reading the English version of the text. My main purpose of the translation was to convey the message and, in a way, to "hear" the voice of my participants by means of their way of speaking. In some instances, the text in English may not sound the way an English native speaker would say it, but, again, making my participants sound like an English speaker was not my goal. Fluent bilingual speakers (English/Spanish) may find useful to refer back to the original version in Spanish.

I coded the data using a manual system. First, I labeled themes by hand during the first cold read of each participant's file. Initially, I assigned theme titles as I saw fit. Later, as I read my other participants narratives I either changed the initial title of the

theme or continued with that labeling. For instance “Little citizens traveling alone” later became “Visiting through others” because only one mother, Erika, mentioned the topic of children being sent to their parents’ home country to visit extended family. However, other examples reaffirmed the fact that undocumented parents “visit” in different ways (i.e., via video chat, video filming of activities in home country). I identified all themes that were recurring regardless if the frequency was not high for some of these. I color-coded each theme by participant and made a chart for each one. I assigned initial theme names, which I later changed based on all the data as a collective. Below is the list of all themes identified from the mothers’ data.

Children First
Religion (believer, traditions)
Solidarity in crossing
Unknown Strength
Oasis
Hardworking
Escorpiones/ Change of Heart
Trapped
Death
Visiting through Others (Little citizens traveling alone)
Desire to succeed
Tender Love
Motivation (family reunification)
Hope
Legal Status (plans if deported Living in the shadows Sacrifice)
Familism
Language
Desire to learn
Agency
Cultural Traditions (thru films, toys)
Children’s perceptions about MX, the border
Mothers as Role models (Compassion, voluntarism, uniting force)
Networking

Table 7. Main Themes from Mother Narratives

During a second reading I started to notice recurrent themes amongst participants. I started coding the materials, or chunking the text. Creswell (2009) suggest segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) into categories, and labeling those categories with a term. Following Creswell's (2009) suggestions, I analyzed individual interviews one by one to identify common topics. From there, I grouped and labeled themes according to the community cultural wealth (CCW) themes identified by Yosso (2005). At this point and informed by my background, cultural intuition, *facultad*, and *mestiza consciousness*, I started categorizing the data. Thus, I created a master subtheme table in MS Excel. I performed a preliminary analysis and recoded some of the data, making adjustments and/or moving subthemes among CCW's categories. The chart below shows the five main subthemes following Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth.

Resistant capital: challenge inequity and/or subordination
Agency
Desire to learn
Identity
Cultural Traditions (thru films, toys)
Linguistic capital: communicate through different languages, styles
Language
Constant contact with home country
Navigational capital: maneuver social institutions
Networking
Social capital: social networks and/or community resources
Religion (believer, traditions)
Networking
Familial capital: cultural and/or family knowledge and histories
Children First
Tender Love
Familism
Mothers as Role models (Compassion, voluntarism, uniting force)
Migration as Family Affair
Visiting through Others (Little citizens traveling alone)
Nostalgia
Death
Motivation (family reunification)

Aspirational capital: aspiration and/or hope despite challenges
Desire to succeed
Hope
Escorpiones/ Change of Heart
Hardworking
Motivation (family reunification)

Table 8. Community Cultural Wealth Subthemes – Mothers' Data

Once I had arranged subthemes by category, I created a quotes master chart for each category and subtheme. Reviewing quotes from each informant per category allowed me to confirm the salient nature of each subthemes as well as its frequency. Informed by the current body of literature on immigrants, I anticipated some broad themes such English language, ethnic traditions related to identity development, school and family life, immigration, and legal status, among others. I followed the same procedure to analyze the children's data.

Most of my data was able to be coded under one of the CCW themes (as shown in table 8). However, there were a few subthemes that did not seem to fully fit in any of the existing subthemes. These data were unique to my study and to my participants' experiences. I deemed it appropriate to classify this new information under a new theme, one that I termed Immigrant Cultural Wealth (ICW). Most of the data under ICW comes from the mother participants. However, some of this experiential knowledge is visible in the children data as well. I was attentive for unexpected or unanticipated topics. As such, I determined that (un)documented immigrant mothers shared common personal traits, which will be explained in Chapter VI. Table 9 below shows my initial subthemes identified under immigrant capital.

Immigrant Capital
Solidarity in crossing
Unrealized Strength
Oasis
Escorpiones/ Change of Heart
Trapped
Legal Status (Plans if deported; Living in the shadows; Sacrifice)
Trauma
Deportation
Crossing Strategies

Table 9. Immigrant Cultural Wealth Initial Subthemes

The list in Table 9 shows all the themes I identified as closely related to immigration and that did not fell in any of the other categories of Yosso's CCW. From this list, and based on the frequency of the topics discussed by my mother participants, I identified three main subthemes which are: 1) Solidarity in Crossing, 2) Unrealized Strength, and 3) Feeling Trapped in the US Oasis or Reauthoring the Selves. The last subthemes has several sections that address desire to learn, cultural traditions, language, contact with the home country and living at a distance. Immigrant Cultural Wealth subthemes will be explained in Chapter VI. Some of the subthemes such as Trauma and Plans if deported are not discussed in this study, but merit further analysis in future research.

Using a chain or snowball purposeful sampling and my network of coworkers[24], I located all participating families by the end of September 2011. Initial life history interviews with each participant mother began in October 2011. Subsequent individual meetings with immigrant mothers lasted until the spring of 2012. I met with children

[24] The parent support specialist at Vargas Elementary School was very resourceful and professional. He is highly regarded by parents. Families, particularly immigrants from Mexico and Central America, come to him for assistance and/or guidance.

from late October to February 2012. During the data collection phase, I transcribed some of the data. I shared my interpretations individually with my participants, on an ongoing basis. I transcribed all of the interviews with mothers, translated the interviews into English, analyzed the data and started the coding process from March 2012 to May 2013. I then created the mothers' interviews in narrative accounts following a chronological order. During this period of 14 months, I categorized the data mainly following Yosso's framework of community cultural wealth (CCW). Although, most of my findings matched each of CCW's subcategories, not all of my findings seem to "fit." I further analyzed and coded the data differently. Finally in the fall of 2013, and after numerous readings of the mother narratives, reviews of my main findings and subthemes, Immigrant Cultural Wealth or *Riqueza Cultural del Inmigrante* emerged.

Researcher's Positionality

My interest in doing research with immigrant populations stems mainly from my own experience as Mexicana, native Spanish speaker, mother, educator who immigrated to the United States, and as woman who constantly negotiates her identities. When I came to work to this country, I realized I was a Mexicana in the United States. Little by little, I started adopting new ways of being, but without forgetting my original ways of knowing and being. As Villenas (1996) and Narayan (1993) point out, we do not suddenly become a new person as we live/acquire new experiences/training. We carry our multiple identities with us. The multiplicity of identities we have to grapple with allows us to get closer to certain spaces, but also distances us from others. Narayan (1993) explains that we can be insiders or partial insiders and be drawn closer to some contexts than to others.

This is what some refer to as an insider/outsider position (Villenas, 1996; Narayan, 1993). I entered this project fully aware of my insider/outsider condition in relation to my immigrant participants, my many privileges for being highly educated, my middle-class condition and my position as administrator at Vargas Elementary School. I am also fully aware that our various experiences do not co-existent (Matsuda, 1989). I cannot pretend that I, with my layers of privilege, truly know or live the Latino immigrant experiences from an undocumented immigrant perspective.

I grew up in Mexico in a working class neighborhood where the majority of the families had at least five children and the mothers worked at home for the family. My father had "middle-class" ideas, and I was exposed to many experiences my friends and neighbors were not. We used to get the daily newspaper. My mother would sometimes take a mid-afternoon break and read a *foto novela* (and my father would hate it, saying it was *mugrero*, junk). She would also read the books my oldest half brother would bring home from college such as Homer's Iliad, The Odyssey, or Victor Hugo's *Los miserables*. Reading was a family habit. We were one of the few families on the block who owned a car. My sister took piano lessons and did not attend the neighborhood middle school. Because my parents were from other cities, we used to travel to those places twice a year and relatives would come over to visit.

My sister married an Americano[25]; a 100% Americano, they said. Not half and half, not a *pocho*, but a green-eyed, White Americano. Consequently, at eight years old, I started taking English as a Foreign Language classes three times a week in the afternoons. Foreign-language classes were not only a social marker but had a far-reaching

[25] *El Americano* was my sister's exchange college classmate. In the 1970s the U.S. and Mexico used to engage in exchange educational programs at the university level.

impact in my life. These sessions allowed me to clearly witness Mexican class stratification. Three times a week my dad would drive my mom and I to the nice part of town, where people drove nice cars and working class people used public transportation. At the end of each class, my mom and I took two buses to get back home. The scenery would change as we traveled back home and into the night. We were poor again.

The rich-poor and the light-dark skin dichotomies were palpable in my day-to-day surroundings throughout my life in Mexico, where class is very important. Sadly to this day, social status in Mexico continues to be associated with physical beauty, light skin, expensive clothes, type of car, and area of residence. European phenotype is preferred over the Mexican indigenous traits characteristic of some Mexicans –anything but dark skin. It is still common to hear people say, "Está blanquito/a" (He/she has light skin) when describing a new born baby. Even when I was "privileged" by my family's financial means at the time[26] and by attending extracurricular activities, I was still not the right color. I remember children calling me *india* in school because of my skin color and because my mother used to braid my long hair. Teachers' pets were almost always those students with lighter skin and green-hazelnut eyes. I grew up thinking I had something going for me because people believed that my family support and social capital were strong: my mother was always at school, my homework was always neat, two of my

[26] Nine years before I was born, my father had lost his job with the railroad service due to an 18-month national strike. My family suffered severe financial and emotional hardship. My mother, father, three preteen boys and my new born sister ended up living with my mother's brother and sister who between the two had five preteen children and two toddlers.

older brothers had gone to college or *escuela normal* (Teacher's College), my father had a car for crying out loud![27]

On a more personal and intimate connection, immigration is a topic very close to my heart. Although surrounded by many layers of privilege and lack of them, I will always be an immigrant to this country. My memories from Mexico are ever present in my life like an open wound. I cannot stop thinking of the ones that stayed behind: my siblings, my nephews, my friends and neighbors. And I wonder what if *I* would have stayed with them? But I opted to migrate and that also hurts like an open wound. But perhaps most importantly, it is my children's –children of immigrants from Mexican descent– heritage country. Cooking dinner one night and reflecting about my interview prompts, I asked my daughter what came to her mind when thinking about Mexico. She replied with a smile, "my gift." I thought she had misunderstood my elaborated question in Spanish. I rephrased my question in English and she said:

—Spanish, my gift from Mexico.

[27] In *Letters to Cristina* (1996), Freire talks about his family class markers (a piano and his father's neckties) and how these were necessary for them to psychologically enable them to deal with their financial crisis and maintain their class position.

IV. LEARNING FROM CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS

Introduction: *Los niños*

The data presented in this chapter gives us a glimpse into their lived experience of children of immigrants as these related to immigration, language and ethnic heritage. Identity development is significantly affected by our environment, personal experiences, and self understandings (della Porta & Viani, 2006; Holland et al., 1998). Children's migration accounts are based on their own lived experiences or what they have learned from close relatives, others and the media. These experiences have a tremendous influence on young children's identity development and their experience of school. The chart below shows the children I interviewed and their background information. Three of my participant students were children of three of my participant mothers. The chart also includes the type and frequency of my meetings with children.

Information about Child Participants							
Name	**Gender**	**Age**	**Grade Level**	**Family's country of origin**	**Related to a mother in this study**	**Type of meeting**	**Number of meetings**
Beto	M	7	1st	Honduras and Mexico	Yes; Rosa	Individual	One
Silvia	F	7	1st	Mexico	Yes; María	Individual	One
Jacquie	F	7	1st	Mexico	No	Individual	One
Betty	F	7	1st	Mexico	No	Group	One
Dulce	F	8	3rd	Mexico	Yes; Mariana	Individual, group	Two
Juan	M	10	5th	Mexico	No	Group	Four
Angela	F	10	5th	Mexico	No	Group	Four
Mónica	F	10	5th	Mexico	No	Group	Four

Table 10. Information about Child Participants

Working with children proved to be easier in pairs or groups than individually. When I met individually with 7-year-olds Beto and Silvia, I was not able to gather as much information as when I met with more than one student. I found myself talking more than listening. Silvia was a bit more open; whereas Beto was more reserved and responded with short answers or by nodding his head. Thus, age of my participants was also relevant to the data collection. Older students (Dulce, eight years old; Juan, Mónica, and Angela, 10 years old) were easier to engage and obtain information from when compared to my younger students. The combination of age and format (individual vs. pairs/groups) may have been a determinant factor when I interviewed Beto and Silvia individually. I am not sure if Betty's (7 years old) willingness to collaborate was due to the fact that her cousin Dulce was also part of the interview or if this was her normal, talkative personality.

The young students' reserve indicated to me that perhaps I needed to recruit older students for my study. I met with Dulce (3rd grader) at the request of her mother. This coincided with my intention to interview older children. Dulce was experiencing the deportation of and reunification with her stepfather. Her mother thought that talking with school personnel would help her daughter[28]. Dulce's cousin, Betty (7 years old), joined us during our second meeting. Betty's contribution turned out to be very rich and added depth to Dulce's account. Interviewing both girls together indicated to me that a focus group approach was probably a more comfortable environment for children. Thus, I recruited three fifth graders.

[28] The school counselor at Vargas Elementary was a White woman who did not speak Spanish. Mariana, Dulce's mom, though that in order for her daughter to express herself, she needed to do it in the language she was more comfortable with, Spanish. I gained Mariana's trust while helping Dulce due to her frequent visits to the nurse.

I met for four times with fifth graders Juan, Angela and Mónica. I used a literacy-based approach to gather data about their experiences related to immigration. Juan's mother, Lupita, was one of the cafeteria monitors at Vargas Elementary. I told her about my study and she agreed for Juan to work with me. Lupita also suggested I invite her niece Angela (also a student at Vargas) to be part of my study. After getting permission from her mother, Angela joined the group. Mónica joined the group for our second and third meetings. I had met Mónica's mother a year prior when they had just moved to the neighborhood and she came to the school to enroll two of her children. She seemed so sincere and open that I mentioned my study even though we had just met. She immediately agreed and added, "Venga a nuestra casa para que sepa en donde vivimos" (Come to our house so you know where we live.) She also mentioned being proud of being Mexican and of speaking Spanish. This short conversation showed me her pride in her ethnic heritage, something that also became evident in Mónica's data. Unfortunately, I was not able to include Monica's mother because she worked more than one job and it was difficult for her to meet with me.

Data: Children of Immigrants Share

During our initial meeting, Dulce, a soft spoken third grader, told me about her grandmother's deportation (Mariana's mother). She talked about how only the grandchildren were able to visit their grandmother in the detention center because their mothers did not have the right papers. She also recounted in sequence the events (as she learned them) of her stepfather's deportation. Because of their undocumented status, Dulce's mother and aunts did not have a form of US identification. Showing their *Cédula*

Consular[29] would have been a clear indication they lacked proper authorization to remain in the US. On our second meeting, with her cousin Betty present, Dulce talked about her feelings (feeling sad about her grandmother), her stepfather's deportation and their reunification. She also shared more details about her grandmother's detention. Below is Dulce's data in narrative format. The illustrations are included further below.

Dulce, 8 years old

> *Me llamo Dulce y tengo ocho años. Vivo con mi mamá y mi papá Javier… él no es mi papá verdadero. Mi papá verdadero se fue a México pero yo no lo veo. Yo antes extrañaba a mi papá Juan… pero ya no. Yo quisiera ir a México porque allá tengo más familiares que acá, y también tengo un tío y primos en Arkansas. Una vez en las vacaciones fuimos a Arkansas nos quedamos tres noches… es que iba a ser Navidad… y pasamos la Navidad allá. En la Noche Buena no dormimos porque queríamos estar a tiempo para abrir los regalos.*
>
> My name is Dulce. I am 8 years old. I live with my mom and my dad Javier… he is not my real dad. My real dad left for Mexico, and I don't see him anymore. I used to miss my dad Juan… but not anymore. I would like to go to Mexico because I have more relatives over there than here, and I also have an uncle and cousins in Arkansas. One time, when I was on vacation, we went to Arkansas and stayed with them for three nights… it was going to be Christmas… and we spent Christmas there. On Christmas Eve we didn't sleep because we wanted to be ready to open presents quick.
>
> *Cuando mi papá Javier no estaba [aquí] yo me sentía triste. Es que él y mi mamá fueron al baile… era verano. Después unas señoras le querían quitar una cartera a mi papá y mi mamá se las quitó. Después empezaron a pelear y le hablaron a la policía y les echaron la culpa a ellos. El esposo de la amiga de mi mamá y mi papá se fueron a la cárcel. El señor tenia papeles y solo fue a la cárcel por un momentito pero a mi papá lo mandaron pa' México. Mi papá no tenía papeles de aquí… papeles son algo que usas si pasas a México te puedes regresar acá también. Yo si puedo entrar y salir [del país] pero mi mami no.*

[29] A *Cédula Consular* is an identification card provided by the Mexican Consulate to Mexicans living abroad. It identifies them as Mexican, and it is used in lieu of a Mexican passport when foreign nationals enter Mexico. Many undocumented Mexican immigrants used a *Cédula* as a form of identification in the US since they are not able to obtain a US form of identification.

When my dad Javier was not [here], I was sad. What happened it's that he and my mom went to a dance… it was summertime. Then some women wanted to steal my dad's wallet from him and my mom took it away from them. Then they started to fight and the police were called in, and [my mom and dad] were blamed for it. My mom's friend's husband and my dad went to jail. That man had papers and he only went to jail for a little while, but they sent my dad back to Mexico. My dad didn't have papers from here… papers are something you use if you go to Mexico and you can come back here too. I can go in and out [of the country] but my mom cannot.

[Esa noche] yo me había quedado con mi abuelo, el padrastro de mi mamá, y mis primas. Cuando mi mamá fue al baile, como a las 12 o 1 de la noche… bueno entre las 12 y las 1, me levanté y les dije a mis primas que me sentía mal. Pensé que había pasado algo. Me levanté y andaba temblando y les dije a mis primas que me sentía mal. Después me dormí preocupada porque pensé que algo les pasó, y si pasó. Cuando amaneció y llegó mi mamá, ella les dijo a mis primas que mi papá estaba en la tienda pero a mí sí me dijo la verdad. Cuando llegó y yo me levanté me dijo eso y yo me puse a llorar. [Mi mamá] tuvo que pagar mucho. Es que los billes… es que… ellos dos juntan el dinero cuando trabajan pero como mi mamá era la única, tuvo que juntar más dinero. Nadie le ayudó a mi mamá… Tuvo que pagar ella sola porque también tuvo que comprar la comida.

[That night] I was staying with my grandfather, my mom's stepdad, and my cousins. When my mom went to the dance, like around midnight or 1 at night… well between 12 and 1, I got up and told my cousins that I was feeling sick. I thought something bad had happened. I got up and was a little shaky and I told my cousins that I felt sick. Then, I went back to sleep worried that something was wrong, and it was. The next morning my mom came back and told my cousins that my dad was at the store, but she told me the truth. and I started crying. [My mom] had to pay a lot of money. It's because of the bills… it's because they [mom and dad]… they put their money together when they work, but now it was just my mom [working] and she had to save more. Nobody helped my mom… she had to come up with the money by herself and she also had to buy food.

La primera vez lo agarró la migra. Luego a la otra vez también lo agarró la migra y estuvo allí [detenido] como por cinco días, no sé… pero yo creo que como 5 días. Cuando pasó un mes, el mes de agosto, lo intentó y ya pasó. El miércoles empezó a caminar hasta el viernes. Se encajó espinas y fue al doctor y dijo el doctor que se iban a salir solas. Y él no podía mover el pie. [En el grupo] había unos señores que mi papi no conocía… como de otra familia, yo no sé… y venían todos juntos. Después

se lo llevaron como a Houston y mi mamá fue a recogerlo. Mi mamá le tuvo que pagar a un amigo de él porque le ayudó. Ya estoy feliz porque mi papá regresó.

The *migra* took [my dad] the first time. And the next time, they also took him and he was [detained] for about five days, I'm not sure… but I think it was about five days. A month went by, the month of August, he tried again and he passed. He started walking on Wednesday and [arrived] on Friday. He got spikes [from plants] in his skin and he went to the doctor and the doctor said that they would come out on their own. He couldn't move his foot. [In the group], there were some men my dad didn't know… they belonged to another family, I don't know… but they all traveled together. Then they took him to Houston and my mom went to pick him up. My mom had to pay a friend of his because he helped her. I am happy because my dad is back.

La migra son como personas que los encierran como en una cárcel… pero no es cárcel. [Son] personas que les dan aviso [a la gente] para que no pasen pa' tras pero los que pasan los agarra la migra. Tienen que pasar con mucho cuidado porque como hay migra, los ven y los agarran. Luego los regresan a México. Los tienen encerrados por unos días en unos cuartitos. Yo sé eso porque a mi abuelita le pasó eso. Es que su hija está en México y tenía una bola aquí (pointing to stomach) y se podía morir… Y mi abuelita fue a México para curarla porque ella sabe mucho de enfermedades y de medicinas. Cuando yo me enfermaba, mi mamá casi siempre le hablaba a ella para que le dijera como me tenía que curar. Mi abuelita no hizo nada malo nada más pasó pa' México pero no puede regresar porque no tiene papeles. Una vez trató de pasar pero la migra la agarró y estuvo ahí como por tres o cinco meses. Ella dice que va a regresar otra vez. Ya tiene 70 y algo de años, yo creo… sí, un 7 y otro número. Eran vacaciones y fuimos a visitarla [al centro de detención]… y nos llevo Adan porque él si tenía papeles. Nos llevó a mis primas y a mí porque él si tiene papeles. Era cerca de México pero ella no hizo nada malo nomás es para que no lo vuelvan a hacer. Después por una ventana con un círculo es por donde puedes hablar y después comenzamos a hablar. Mi mamá no me podía llevar porque ella no tiene papeles. Mis tías y mi mamá se sintieron tristes y estaban preocupadas. Yo estaba en segundo grado.

The *migra* are people who put others away like in a jail… but it's not a jail. They warn others not to cross this way, but the *migra* takes the ones who do cross. People have to cross with caution since there's *migra* nearby. If the *migra* see them, they catch the people and take them back to Mexico. They keep them locked in very small rooms for days. I know this because it happened to my grandmother. What happened is that my grandmother's daughter is in Mexico and she had a ball [tumor] right here

> [pointing to her stomach] and she could die… my grandmother went to Mexico to heal her because she knows a lot about illnesses and about all kinds of medicine. When I would get sick, my mom almost always would call her to ask her how she needed to heal me. My grandma didn't do anything bad, she just crossed to Mexico, but she can't come back to the US because she doesn't have papers. One time she tried to cross [the border] but she was taken by the *migra* and was kept there for three or five months. She says she is going to come back again. She is like 70 and some years, I think… yes, a 7 and another number. We went to visit her [to the detention center] during vacation… and Adan took me and my cousins because he has papers. [The place] was close to Mexico. She didn't do anything bad; it was just so she wouldn't do it again. There was a small window that had a circle in it, and that's how we talked to her. My mom couldn't take me because she doesn't have papers. My aunts and my mom were sad and were worried. I was in the second grade.

At the end of our meeting, I asked Dulce how she would like the world to be.

Her response was:

> *Que fuera fácil cruzar el puente y que no tuviera que andar nadie pasando de escondidas. Que mi papi no tenga que caminar por tres días.*
> That it would be easy to cross and that nobody would have to sneak across the border; that my dad would not have had to walk for three days.

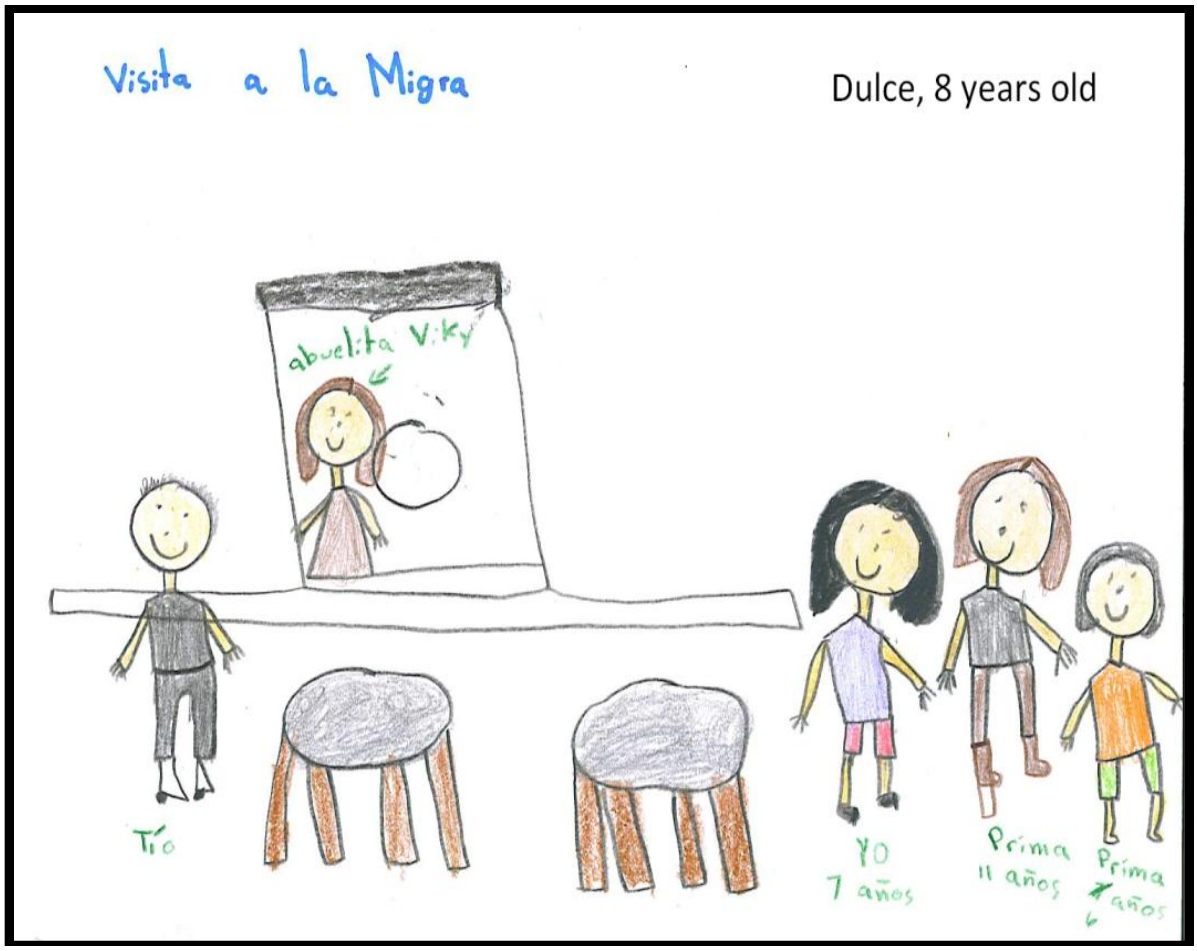

Illustration 1: Visit to the Immigration Center

Dulces's account allows us to see the intricacies of the life of a child in a mixed status family. Dulce has experienced deportation of a close relative more than once in her short life. These events have clearly marked her and affected her emotionally. Deportation affects not only the ones who are deported, but also their families who remain in the US. Although Dulce does not know all of the details of her stepfather's ordeal to cross to the US, she retells the story in a sequential order. She has also been impacted by the deportation of her grandmother, especially her visit to the detention center. There, she saw her grandmother as a different person than the one she knew. Although she knows her grandmother does not have legal papers, Dulce does not fully

understand why she was detained and verbalizes it as, "She did not do anything bad." She sees her grandmother's detention more like a warning than an incarceration.

Dulce, eight years old, Betty, seven years old

Betty is a vivacious first grader. Dulce and Betty experienced the same events related to the deportation of their grandmother. At first, Betty seemed quiet. Not knowing how comfortable she would feel with me, I started by saying I was from Mexico, that I worked at a school, and that I had two young children. We then began talking about their grandmother. Below is an excerpt of my conversation with the two girls.

I: ¿Ustedes saben qué es la frontera?
B: *Yo he escuchado que en la frontera hay un puente y abajo hay agua y por el puente pasa la gente. Cuando fuimos a ver a mi abuelita [al centro de detención] nos dijeron lo del puente. Pienso que mi abuelita pasó por ahí cuando quería llegar a México. Ella se iba a ir en autobús pero la dejaron en un lugar, no sé en donde… y tuvo que caminar muuuucho.*

D: *[La frontera] Es cuando cruzan y los agarran… Es para que no lo vuelvan a hacer pero no agarran a todos. …tratan de cruzan el puente para pasar a Central Texas y después las agarran y las ponen como en una cárcel. Mi abuelita trató de cruzar caminando.*

B: *[Fuimos a verla y] nos llevó Adan, es un tío, porque mi abuelito no sabía dónde estaba ese lugar. Yo tenía cinco o seis años. Nuestras mamás no pudieron ir porque no tenían papeles. Si no tienen papeles allá no se pueden regresar. También fue mi hermana Jacquie (11 años) y mi prima, ella, Dulce. Mi papá también estaba en México. Si alcanzó a venir y después se fue otra vez.*

D: *Cuando mi abuelita iba a pasar, un policía tenía un perro policía y cuando mi abuelita tenía las pastillas, el perro las olio y pensaron que era droga.*

B: *[Droga] es como algo mal… pero esas [pastillas] eran porque… es que ella se le subía la azúcar y se podía agitar.*

D: *Y una vez se le subió mucho la azúcar y no pudo hablar.*

B: *Cuando fuimos a ver a mi abuelita le pusimos nuestro cabello adentro por un hoyito y ella puso la mano y la pusimos nosotros también. Después ella nos puso su pelo y lo tocamos.*

D: *Cuando la fuimos a ver… es que… cuando estaba en la casa tenía largo pelo, y cundo fuimos a verla…ya no… es que le cortaron el pelo [en el centro de detención]*.

English translation.

I: Do you know what the border is?

B: I have heard there is a bridge on the border and that there's water underneath, and people use the bridge to cross. When we went to see my grandma [at the detention center] they told us about the bridge. I think my grandma passed through there when she went to Mexico. She was going to go by bus but they left her in a place, I don't know where… and she had to walk really, really far.

D: [The border] it's where they cross and get caught… It's so they don't do it again, but they don't catch everybody… they try to cross the bridge to get to Austin, and then they catch them and put them in a kind of jail. My grandma tried to cross on foot. [We went to see her and] Adan, he is one of my uncles, took us because my grandfather didn't know where that place was. I was about five or six years old. Our mothers couldn't go because they didn't have papers. If they don't have papers, they can't come back [here]. My sister Jacquie (11 years old) also went and my cousin Dulce. My dad was also in Mexico. But he was able to come and then he left again.

D: When my grandma was trying to cross, a policeman had a police dog … and the dog sniffed my grandma's pills and they thought it was drugs.

B: [Drugs] are something bad… but she had those [pills] because… it's because she has diabetes and she becomes agitated.

D: And one time her sugar [level] went really high and she could not talk.

B: When we went to see my grandma we put our hair through the small opening, and she put her hand through it. We put our hand through too and then she put her hair [through the small opening] and we touched her hair.

D: When we went to see her… it's because… when she was at home she had long hair, and we went to see her… she didn't anymore… it's because they cut her hair [at the detention center].

My conversation with Betty and Dulce corroborates their mutual experience as cousins that have lived the deportation of a close relative, their grandmother. Neither one of them has ever been to Mexico, nor do they know the US-Mexico border. Because of the undocumented legal status of their parents, the young girls are put in the position of representing them to provide emotional support to their grandmother. This is an example of how children of immigrants are drawn into the figured world of their undocumented immigrant parents due to mixed (il)legal status. This participation into the figured world of immigrants allows children of immigrants to acquire a new set of unique skills. I believe that these events present for children of immigrants opportunities to develop self confidence or *auto confianza* and self regulation in

At the end of our conversation, I asked the girls if they wanted to draw about their visit. They drew pictures of their visit to the detention center. Dulce drew the big gates at the entrance of the detention center. Betty drew the visiting area where they met their grandmother. They helped each other by remembering details of the place and of the visit. Below are their pictures.

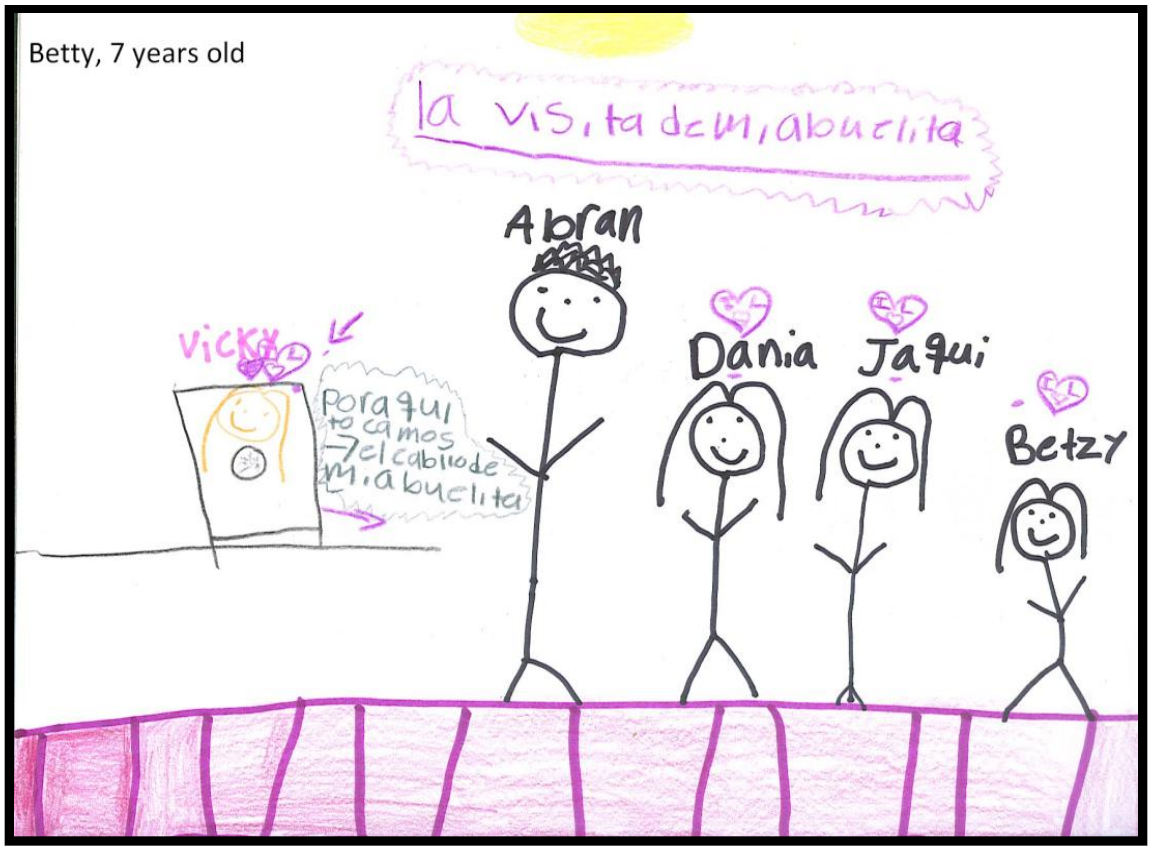

Illustration 2: Visiting my Grandmother

Betty's picture, above, gives us a visual perspective of where she was in relation to her detained grandmother. It is also a powerful visual account of the event. Betty drew a heart above each of the children's names and next to her grandmother's name. The hearts represent the love they have for each other. The inscription by her grandmother says, "This is [the opening] through which we touch my grandmother's hair." Betty also said that the girls had put their hair through the small opening so their grandmother could also touch it. Needless to say this was probably a sad encounter with a loved one who meant so much to the children. Through this account we see that children of immigrants act as extensions and supports for their families in situations in which these are not able to do it due to their legal status.

Illustration 3: Detention Center

Dulce's picture above illustrates the outside of the detention center. She titled it "Detención" or Detention. And she also wrote: "This is the Detention [Center] where we went to visit my grandmother."

As part of my literature sessions with the fifth graders, I read several books with topics related to migration. Then, we talked about parts of the stories or illustrations that were relevant to them. The students also produced some illustrations and quick writes/ notes while they listened to each story. The children explained their illustrations to the group which provided another opportunity to further expand on the topics discussed. We read *How Many Days to America: a Thanksgiving story* (Bunting, 1990), *Going Home*

(Bunting, 1996), *Amigos del otro lado*, *Friends from the Other Side* (Anzadúa, 1997), and *From North to South/ De norte a sur* (Colato & Cepeda, 2010).

Next I present the thematic analysis of the data of my work with children.

Themes: Learning from children of immigrants

Children of immigrants in this study did not have the experience of crossing as unauthorized immigrants like my mother participants did. Therefore some of the subthemes in the mothers' data (solidarity in crossing, unrealized strength, trauma) were not evident in my conversations with children. The major themes that emerged from my meetings with the children were: immigrant cultural capital (immigration knowledge), linguistic capital (language use and boundaries), and resistant capital (ethnic heritage and pride). Below I elaborate on these themes which, relate to the adult narratives and my findings about the unauthorized immigrant mothers presented in the next chapters.

Immigrant Cultural Wealth: *Riqueza cultural del inmigrante* (ICW)

This theme relates to children's awareness of aspects of life related to immigration or to coming to the US. By purposefully guiding our conversations into the area of immigration, l let my child participants know that we shared a common background and knowledge. The children were not surprised by the topics, nor did they ask for clarification about a particular area. They were familiar with *coyotes*, *la migra*, crossing to the US in search of a job, the importance of having a VISA or legal papers, and adults taking a test to become a citizen.

As explained in the previous chapter, Yosso's community cultural wealth (2005) aided me in the analysis of this study. However, immigrant communities have a particular and rich knowledge that is not being addressed by any of Yosso's capitals. Using the ICW lens to analyze the experiences of children of immigrants allowed me to discover the strength in their knowledge. I believe these findings will elucidate our understandings of the richness of cultural wealth among the children of immigrants.

Silvia, Jacquie and Dulce experienced the process of deportation of their fathers. Jacquie's dad and Dulce's stepfather were deported to Mexico. Silvia's dad was detained, but María, his wife, hired a lawyer who was able to stop his deportation. All girls spoke about "not having papers," "*la migra*," and worried about their parents not being able to come back to the US. Silvia differentiated between a passport (to enter the US) and "papers" to be in the US permanently. Beto did not seem to know much about traveling, required documents or anything related to immigration. When I asked him if special documents are needed to travel to another country, he said a map was needed. I believe Beto had a more limited knowledge of traveling documents because his mother, Rosa, is from Honduras and it is harder (both physically and financially) for undocumented immigrants from Central America to travel back and forth to their countries of origin. Once in the US, unauthorized Central Americans stay. Although it is also very difficult for undocumented Mexicans to go back and forth, it is more common than for Central Americans. My two mother participants from Honduras confirmed this.

Dulce and Betty's illustrations give us a glimpse into their lived experience of visiting their grandmother in an immigration detention center. Their young age might have served as a barrier to the reality that their grandmother was a detainee awaiting

deportation. Dulce's illustration of the exterior of the detention center shows a tall fence and a huge gate. The vehicles parked in the parking lot look small compared with the impressive metal barrier of the detention center. Dulce explained to me that vehicles parked on each side of their "troca", or truck in English, belonged to the police (blue) and to immigration officials (green). Dulce's observation is relevant because it demonstrates the familiarity children with immigrant backgrounds in mixed status families have with these facts. The lived experiences of young children of immigrants have equipped them with a unique awareness that is particular to their environment. Beyond lived experiences of young children of immigrants, these examples allow us to see children's participation on the figured world (Holland et al, 1998) of their families and extended relatives as (un)documented immigrants. US-born children of immigrants in mixed status families participate in the complex world of their families related to legal affairs. Through this dynamic, Latino children of immigrants are drawn into into figured worlds through the association with their families background as (un)documented immigrants. Urrieta et al. (2011) in their study with incarcerated youth in a post-secondary educational program describe for us how people can be recruited or forced into figured worlds depending on their circumstances.

The book *Friends from the Other Side* (Anzadúa, 1997) was very helpful in exploring immigration-related topics with the older students. Children mentioned motives for migrating to the US (work, to reunite with family members), and related that to their own families. Mónica expressed that her uncles, her aunts and her mom came to the US to work. Angela shared that her mom had a job in Mexico, but this ended so she decided to come to the US in search of a better life. Table 5.4 shows a sample of a reflection

during the discussion of the book *How Many Days to America: a Thanksgiving story* (Bunting, 1990).

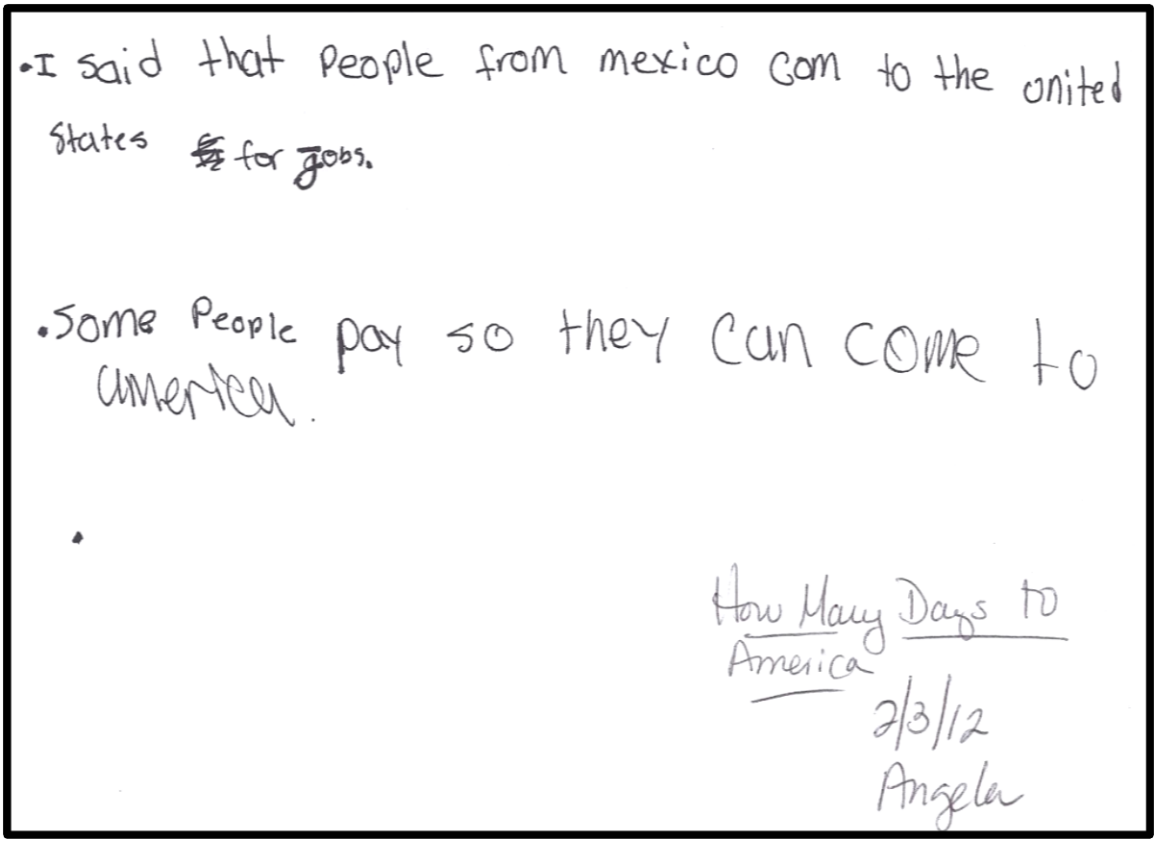

Illustration 4: Quick Note Student reflection in response to *How Many Days to America: a Thanksgiving story* (Bunting, 1990).

Children were also aware of aspects of immigration such as immigration officers commonly known as "la migra." Juan explained that "la migra are [the people] in the border who catch the ones who don't have papers" (*La migra son los de la frontera que agarran a los que no tienen papeles*.) Fifth graders knew that people cannot share "papeles" or legal papers with others. Juan added that it's illegal to share papers ("*Es illegal prestar los papeles*"). At one point in the book immigration officers are looking for undocumented immigrants in a neighborhood. Joaquin, one of the characters, is very nervous. Juan's response to this scene was:

> *Joaquín está muy espantado porque su mamá está sola y la migra va a inspectar. Ellos son inmigrantes.* They have to be very quiet para que no los encuentren si no se los llevan pa' México, pa' tras. [Joaquin is very scared because his mom is alone and the immigration officers are checking. They are immigrants. They have to be very quiet so they don't find them, if not they are taken back to Mexico.]

Juan's response allowed me to see his keen awareness of what it means to be an undocumented immigrant in the US. Juan has never been in a situation similar to the character in the story because he was born the US. Thus, his knowledge comes from family stories and experiences. Angela, Juan's cousin, shared her fear about the scene adding that she would be afraid if anything like that happened to her. She responded to Juan in this way:

> *A mí me da miedo como si nos pasa eso. Yo nací aquí y tengo papeles pero mis padres no. Es que tú [Juan] eres diferente porque tus papás ya tienen papeles.* ***Los míos no****. Mi papá pudo [arreglar papeles] pero no quiso. Mi tío, el hermano de mi papá, se casó con una mujer de aquí y ella le arregló a él, y luego él le arregló a todos sus hermanos pero mi papá no quiso. Yo hubiera querido que mi papá hubiera arreglado sus papeles. Pa' que se los arregle a mi mamá, y luego mi mamá se los arregle a mi hermano.*
> I would be afraid if anything like that were to happen to us. I was born here and have papers, but my parents don't. You [Juan] are different because your parents do have papers. *Mine don't.* My father could have gotten his papers, but he chose not to. My uncle, my father's brother, married a woman [from the US] and she helped him get his papers; then he helped his brothers get their papers, but my father did not want to. I wish my father had gotten his legal papers. Then he could help my mother get her papers, and she could help my brother get his.

The book *From North to South/De norte a sur* (Colato & Cepeda, 2010) tells the story of a young boy whose mother has been deported because she did not have proper documents to remain in the US. Although I worried that talking about deportation would worry my young participants, this book is written in a very positive way. The book shows the character's excitement about visiting his mother in Tijuana, Mexico. Fifth graders

were familiar with the topic. Angela drew a picture of a relative meeting with his children. In the background, she drew the car of the *coyote* (smuggler) who transported her relative. Mónica's picture shows the moment the family is together again in their house in the US. Their pictures depict family separation and reunification, love, and hope. Their pictures and words also show their understanding of the complex situations unauthorized immigrants experience.

Illustration 5: Student drawing response to *From North to South/ De norte a sur* (Colato & Cepeda, 2010), Mónica, 10 years old.

The picture above narrates several scenes from the story that were relevant for Mónica. At the bottom of the page, there are three little windows with small figures inside. That scene represents the character visiting his mother in the detention center. On the right, there is a figure waving goodbye to a car on the road. That is the mother who

stayed “on the other side.” Finally, on the left side, there is the family reunification when the father arrives home with the mother’s luggage and the child is hugging his mother. The car is seen through the open door and family pictures seen on top of the dresser. Mónica’s reunification scene positioned in the center with more details indicated the main idea she grasped from the story. The visit to the detention center and to the mother in Tijuana “on the other side of the road,” tell us of the supporting details.

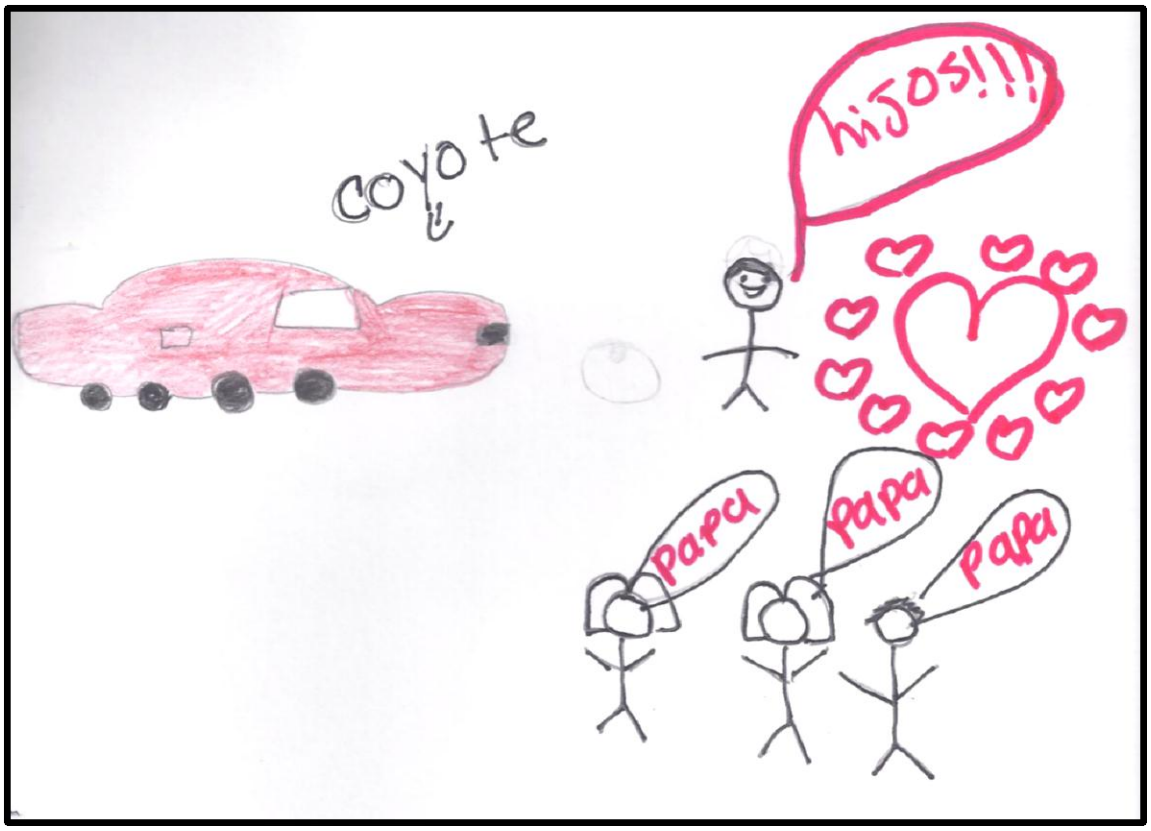

Illustration 6: Student Drawing about Family Reunification, Angela 10 years old.

Angela’s picture depicts a father reuniting with his children. It also shows the car of the smuggler (Coyote) who helped the father cross the border. Similar to Betty’s picture when visiting her grandmother at the detention center, Angela drew hearts to signify the love for each other. The father shows a big smile and open arms. The children facing the father, say “Papá” and welcome him. Angela recounted this event as a joyful

moment when his uncle and cousins reunited. On the back of her picture Angela wrote that the story *From North to South/De norte a sur* (Colato & Cepeda, 2010) reminded her of her because she and her brother had been separated from her mother. During two of our meetings, Juan whispered to Angela, "Can I tell her?" and "Le digo," (Do I tell her?) referring to me. Angela said no in both occasions. I never knew what it was, but suspected it had to be with her legal status. She told me that had been born in the US, but she also said she was in Mexico when she was two years old. With this picture, Angela said she had been separated from her mother. She had also said that her mother came to the US first, alone, in search of work. I will never know what this 10 year old did not want for me to know, but her determination not to disclose it shows her strong will and loyalty to her family. In my experience as an educator and administrator, many times I have seen children share private or inappropriate information as a way of calling attention. Angela's action also tells me her awareness about the potential consequences of disclosing delicate matters. Angela's decision not to disclose private family matters with me show that children of immigrants in mixed-legal status families develop a sense of responsibility towards their family, learn to discern from private and public information, are able to maneuver through and understand certain adult situations.

Older children showed their interest and knowledge on current immigration issues and immigration law. Juan talked about the 10-year punishment given to undocumented immigrants when they are deported to their countries. He said, "I think there is a new law… that when people are caught by *la migra*, they cannot come here [to the US] for 10 years." The media is a source of both information and worry for children. Juan recounted a news report about Arizona's minutemen. Angela talked about President Obama's

immigration reform plan: “Some months ago, or years, Barack Obama said he was going to fix everything, and he has not done it yet.”

Latino children of immigrants possess a wealth of knowledge related to the area of immigration and the law. They have lived through though experiences themselves or have experienced those through close relatives. So, why is this relevant for their education? And, why is Immigrant Cultural Wealth or *Riquieza cultural del inmigrante* (ICW) a relevant lens to do research with immigrant populations. As a field, we need to grapple more with the ways in which the immigrant experience plays out in the educational experiences of children. Latino children of immigrants are often referred to as “English (Language) Learners” or “Limited English Proficient” students, both in schools and in the research field. But these children are more than a language label. They are children of immigrants with complex, rich lives sometimes impacted by the traumas engendered by immigration. Thus, we need to understand and work at the intersections of these different dimensions of experience that Latino children of immigrants bring to our classrooms to avoid discrimination against immigrant populations.

Linguistic Capital

Language plays a very strong role among bilingual, translational (Menjívar, 2002; Sánchez, 2001) children with immigrant background. Historically, the children of immigrants have played a role as language and culture brokers for their families (Reynolds & Orellana, 2009). Children reported using language strategically to help their families navigate life in the US. Through language brokering (Tse, 1996; Orellana, 2003) young children of immigrants provide a service to both their families and the community.

Angela was the intermediary between her mother and a police officer when somebody tried to break into their house: "My mom had to wake me up so I could talk to the police in English." Juan reported assisting his father with job-related issues. His father would resort to Juan or Juan's older brother when he could not communicate with the person soliciting his services. Juan would ask potential customers about the time, location, and the specifics of the job. Mónica would use her English skills to help her mother communicate with customers at the cafeteria where she works. These examples suggest some of the challenges children of immigrants must grapple with when they are placed in complex situations. Reynolds and Orellana (2009) explain that these incidents also reveal the anxieties that immigrant parents feel in outer-sphere encounters and their sense that their bilingual children are more capable of managing these situations than they are.

Children observed that English and Spanish dominate separate spaces. English-school and Spanish-home associations were mentioned by all children in my data set. They also spoke of language preferences and language boundaries. First grader Silvia mentioned preferring Spanish because that is her parents' language. Beto and Jacquie felt proud of their increasing knowledge of English. Juan and Angela reported preferring English when communicating with others, particularly at school. Juan said he preferred English because he has been in mainstream classes since he was little and he is used to the language. Angela indicated that she started in bilingual classes, but now that she was in an all-English class, she was getting used to speaking English more often. Mónica preferred Spanish because that is her family's language and everybody speaks it at home. Research (Valenzuela, 1999; Olsen, 1997) indicates that adolescent, recent immigrants become "English seekers" relatively quickly. My participants' accounts show the same

results as previous studies. The difference I found is that the children in my study talked about differentiating their language use according to location and audience. They all talked about using Spanish at home to communicate with their parents, for whom Spanish is easier. They also acknowledged that their Spanish is languishing.

> *Pero casi nuestros padres no nos entienden porque se nos está yendo el español.*
> It is hard for our parents to understand us because we are losing our Spanish.
>
> Angela

Contrary to previous studies (Bejarano, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999) which indicate that immigrant teenagers tend to isolate themselves from mainstream students because of their lack of command of English, my young participants seemed to have acquired enough English-Spanish skills to navigate a bilingual school world. They saw English as the language for school, but did not abandon their Spanish. Our conversations were conducted in English and Spanish and they did not have any problems using either language. This speaks of their bilingual fluidity that has been fostered at both home (many immigrant parents expect children to speak Spanish at home) and by the inclusion of bilingual programs in our public schools.

> *Y mi papá cuando hablo inglés en la casa me dice, "Aquí no se habla inglés, nada más en la escuela." Pues en la escuela puro inglés y en la casa puro español.*
> When I speak English at home, my father tells me, "English is not spoken here, only at school." At school only English and at home only Spanish.
>
> Angela

Resistant Capital

Ethnic heritage and pride were evident among my child participants. Clearly, when immigrant families preserve the home language, ethnic traditions and customs children are better able to resist subordination to the mainstream culture. Ethnic identity is intrinsically linked to linguistic identity (Bejarano, 2005, Valenzuela, 1999). By requesting that their children speak their heritage language at home, immigrant parents are conveying the message that Spanish is not only important for communicating with them (Wong Fillmore, 1991), but also part of them as individuals. Children associated language with identity. Beto mentioned being "a little American" because he knew a "little English." Silvia also associated her parent's country of origin as part of her identity. Silvia mentioned "being Mexican because her mom and dad are from Mexico." The mothers in my study also spoke of asking their children to use Spanish at home as a way to preserve their traditions and heritage. Young children of immigrants in my study are not succumbing so easily into becoming "American" (Olson, 1997; Godínez, 2006) by way of shedding their heritage language.

> *Mi mamá me dice, ¡No hables en inglés [en la casa] porque así no naciste! ¡Naciste con mexicanos, no americanos!*
> Mi mom tells me, Don't speak English [at home] because that's not how you were born! You were born with Mexicans, not Americans!
>
> Mónica

> *Lo que mi mamá me dice es que tengo que hablar más español que inglés porque es el idioma de mi familia.*
> My mom tells me that I have to speak more Spanish that English because that is my family's language.
>
> Juan

Parents are aware that US schools, implicitly and explicitly, are encouraging the loss of home language (Soto, 1997; Wong-Fillmore, 1991) and are providing tools to their

children to safeguard their ethnic heritage. In doing so, immigrant parents are also instilling a sense of pride in their children for their family language and their ethnic identity. Angela said that she feels Mexican when she goes to Mexico and American when she is in the US. Silvia spoke about Mexican cultural artifacts (typical dress and dances), types of foods, and nationalistic artifacts she knows (Mexican flag). Immigrant parents are making their children aware of their transnational identities (Menjívar, 2002; Sánchez, 2001), and the children feel good about it. Mónica said that her mother reminded her that although she was born in the US, she has Mexican blood. Juan, smart and inquisitive, took his pride a step further by studying and researching about the Aztecs. He read about the ancient culture on his own. He then had some questions for his 16 year-old cousin "who studies Mexican history" in Mexico. He concluded that he is Aztec too!

Conclusion

The salient themes found in the children's data echo those in the immigrant mothers' narratives and their experiences with immigration. Based on the mothers' narratives and the students' experiences with immigration, I argue that migration experiences – whether their own, shared or learned – and legal status have a tremendous influence on the identity development of young scholars and their experiences of school. Identity development is significantly affected by our environment, personal experiences, and self understandings (della Porta & Viani, 2006; Holland et al., 1998). When their environment is permeated by stories of other countries, relatives left behind, travels to countries of origin, and longings to visit those places, this becomes part of the personal

experiences of young children of immigrants. Although not their own, the powerful, emotional experiences of immigration are latent in the lives of young students whose families have migrated to the US. This became evident during my conversations with all these children. The students did not need any preamble when sharing stories about an uncle who was deported and brought back to the US, about traveling to México with relatives because their parents "couldn't go," or feeling nervous when crossing the border back to the US. These topics were common knowledge for my young participants. At first, when designing my study, I was hesitant about how to approach children with delicate topics such as immigration and legal status. I was surprised, however, by the ease with which we delved into these topics. In our group meetings with fifth graders, nobody was judgmental of each other or seemed surprised when hearing a particular story. It seemed the topics were familiar to everybody in the group; a conversation in which we all shared a common background.

Children's understandings of self (Holland, et al., 1998) are clear. They are US-born and self identified as American, but they also see their parents' ethnic ancestry as part of their identity. When they talk about being Mexican in Mexico and American in the US, or being a "little American" for speaking some English, they are telling us of their awareness of their transnational identities. Young children of immigrants also feel pride in their ethnic heritage and externalize it. This new generation is proud of speaking Spanish and English. In my view, this healthy approach to being bilingual is the product of years of legal battles to establish bilingual education as a right, as well as parents' efforts to keep their heritage.

V. IMMIGRANT MOTHERS TELL THEIR STORIES

Introduction

My study seeks to examine Mexican and Central American immigrant children's opportunities to (re)create their ethnic identity amid oppressive institutional and social forces, in relation to (un)documented immigrant status. This chapter addresses the influence immigrant mothers' lived experiences have in shaping their children's ethnic identity. This study also explores the influence that migrating to the United States and (un)documented status has on immigrant mothers from Mexico and Central America in mixed status families.

Included in this chapter are the data and findings collected during my conversations with immigrant mothers and literature discussions with young children that relate to my research question and sub-questions:

How do undocumented mothers and children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America construct self-understandings in relation to their ethnic identity and immigration experiences in mixed-legal status families?

The study sub-questions are:

1. How do children in mixed status immigrant families negotiate the tensions that migration and (un)documented status can engender?
2. How do undocumented mothers' immigration experiences influence children's self identification and the development of an ethnic identity?
3. How do immigration experiences foster agency among undocumented mothers from Mexico and Central America?

The decision to work with mothers and children with immigrant backgrounds, although easy at first, became a source of emotional encounters and personal reflections

that led me to question my own interest in the topic. Was it self-serving? Was I really trying to prove anything other than my own painful, but at the same time, enriching experience as an immigrant? Will my data show any meaningful results? It was troubling to dig into others' intimate stories of suffering, survival and human pain. It was uplifting, however, to learn from immigrant mothers about their thirst for life, their positive attitude amid odd chances, and their perseverance. The emotional toll that immigrant mothers endure on a daily basis is enormous and yet they find strength to not give in. Immigrant women in general in US society are "relatively invisible as a recognizable group" (Pearce, et al., 2011). Whether as (un)authorized workers, wives or mothers, their presence is significant in the daily life of Americans across all regions of the nation. Therefore, it is paramount to analyze and study the role immigrant mothers, in particular, play in the shaping of our students' identities. Focusing on immigrant women also helps us elucidate understandings about the phenomenon of immigration itself. Working with immigrant populations fulfilled a sense of longing for self-validation and recognition, and gave me a renewed respect for immigrant mothers and their families. This author's own life worlds –and the fact that I *am* an immigrant woman – are the key motivations behind my interest in this subject. Stimulated by my graduate school courses, this topic arose out of my personal knowledge and my desire to deepen and expand research knowledge.

This chapter focuses on five case studies of immigrant mothers. It is important for their voices to be heard as close as possible as they shared their stories with me. Thus, keeping their accounts in Spanish is relevant to this purpose. I felt that by excluding their native language some of that voice would have been lost. An English translation of their stories is also included. Each narrative has been condensed from a larger set of data

collected through several individual meetings with each participant. In an attempt at providing an engaging, personal and more realistic account of their stories, I have reconstructed the participants' narratives to present a chronological order of events. Part of the reason of reconstructing the mothers' stories was to allow their narratives to flow and have more cohesiveness. In some instances, the same topics arose at different meetings, adding important details to previously collected data. To the extent possible, I tried to capture their unique expressive styles and individual voices to transmit their lived experiences. I felt it was crucial and deserving for their narratives to stand alone and separate from my interpretations. The participant's narratives represent their unique view of the world and this is a powerful tool in understanding their own identity and history-in-person (Holland et al., 1998). What follows are five narratives of immigrant mothers from Mexico and Central America. Their narratives center on their motivations to migrate to the US, their experiences when crossing the border and their lives in the US. In chapter six, I present other aspects of the mothers' accounts that are more closely aligned with community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), such as transmission of cultural capital. I also propose and analyze a new cultural wealth that focuses on the cultural capital of immigrants, which I have termed Immigrant Cultural Wealth (ICW).

Immigrant Mothers Narratives

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is from Honduras. She came to the U.S. about 12 years ago. She is 35 years old and has two boys. One is in 1st grade and the other is nine months old. In Honduras, she left three children from her first husband. My initial meetings with Elizabeth had to do

with her school-age child's misbehavior. Lalo (pseudonym) had difficulty controlling his behavior in class and was constantly sent to the office of the school where I worked at the time. Lalo's frequent trips to my office kept Elizabeth and me in constant communication for two years. When I shared with her about my study, she just smiled politely and said she would let me know later ("Luego le aviso."). Then one day she said we could meet after school. During our initial meeting we talked about personal information, her life in the US, and about Lalo. It was at a later meeting that she opened up about her children left behind in Honduras. To this day, my heart sinks when I remember her crying uncontrollably while telling me about her children. This revelation took me completely by surprise. I had read about mothers who work in one country and mother at a distance in another nation state (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2002; Nazario, 2006; Boehm, 2012), but I did not know this was Elizabeth's story. Below is my interpretation of Elizabeth's narrative. In an effort to have her voice heard, I kept the Spanish as true as possible. An English translation follows the original version.

> *Tenía 23 años cuando me vine sola de Honduras en el año 2000. No sufrí tanto como las demás personas que se vienen en el tren. Digamos que no sufrí mucho nomás cuando crucé el río. Yo me vine en autobús, transbordando donde están las garitas de revisión [en México]. El autobús se para en varias casetas de inmigración… pero yo antes era bien flaquita, no parecía mayor de edad y creo que nunca pensaron que yo venía sola. Y me dijo una señora, "Hay chamaca, nomás no hables porque cuando hablas se te nota el acento." En México me quedé una semana en Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, pero ahí es muy difícil porque la policía siempre está hablando por la radio [en las calles] a las personas que no ayuden a los migrantes; que si se dan cuenta que ellos tienen a alguien [en su casa] que no tiene papeles lo meten preso también. Hay muchas buenas personas también. Me quedaba en una iglesia porque como mi papá es pastor… gracias a Dios yo creo que por eso no me pasó nada porque mi papá siempre me tenía en oración. Yo no puedo imaginarme como uno tiene ese valor de ir a lugares que uno no conoce.*

I was 23 years old when I came alone from Honduras in 2000. I didn't suffer as much as other people that come by train. We can say that I didn't suffer that much except when I crossed the river. I came by bus, changing buses where there are checking points [in Mexico]. The bus stops in several immigration checkpoints, but back then I was very slender, I didn't look like an adult and I don't think people thought that I was traveling alone. A lady told me, "Girl, just don't talk because when you talk your accent is noticeable." In Mexico I stayed a week in Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, but it is very difficult there because the police are always patrolling the streets and they tell people through the radio, not to help migrants; and if they find out that people have somebody [in their house] that does not have papers, they take them to jail too. But there are also a lot of good people. I stayed in a church because my father is a preacher… thank God, I believe that is the reason that nothing bad happened to me because my dad always had me in his prayers. I cannot imagine how someone can have the courage to go to places you do not even know.

*Siempre me acuerdo que nos perdimos **una semana** (énfasis original) en el desierto… porque [los coyotes] vienen con una brújula y eso les viene indicando. Uno no viene por un camino, viene por en medio del monte y uno viene haciendo el camino. La verdad uno nunca sabe por dónde anda porque siempre nos llevan de noche. Casi no comíamos. Ellos nos pusieron una mochila con latitas y con agua. El agua se nos acabó al siguiente día y agarrábamos del agua de los charquitos. En una ocasión hallamos agua de esa que tiene una lama verde, con gusanitos, y nosotros los apartamos y tomamos de esa agua sucia, de la sed que traíamos. Llegamos a una hacienda le decimos nosotros, a un rancho, y el señor era de Monterrey pero tenía papeles de acá. Y el señor nos dijo, "Los voy a dejar pasar porque traen a esa muchacha, me da lástima porque yo tengo hijas." Y ellos nos regalaron ropa. A mí me dejaron que entrara a la casa [a dormir] pero a los muchachos los dejaron afuera. Veníamos como por ahí de quince personas. ¡Hay no, es muy difícil!*

I'll never forget that we were lost for *a whole week* (original emphasis) in the desert… because [the smugglers] use a compass and that guides them. You don't follow a path, you come through the middle of the dessert and you make the path. The truth is that you don't know where you are because we are forced to travel [on foot] at night. We hardly ate anything. They packed for us a backpack with canned meals and water. We ran out of water the following day and we drank from little puddles. One time, we found water that had a green layer on top, with small larvae; we just moved them to the side and drank from that dirty water because we were very thirsty. We arrived to what we call a hacienda, or a ranch, and the owner was from Monterrey, but had papers from here. And he said, "I'm going to let you in because there is a girl in your group and I feel sorry for her because I have daughters too." They gave us clothes too. They let me

spend the night inside the house, but the men stayed outside. We were about 15. Oh my, it's so hard!

Hay personas que están acá que ilusionan a veces a uno. Nosotros teníamos unos primos y uno se vino para acá pa' NY y él me dijo que me viniera, que él me iba a pagar el coyote. Y yo le dije a mi mamá, "Mamá yo me voy a ir. Tengo ambiciones en la vida. Quiero que tengamos una casa más o menos." Y mi mamá me dijo que ella me cuidaba los niños. Yo me deshice de todas mis cositas más valiositas que tenía para agarrar el pasaje y venirme y dejarles a mis niños. Y me vine pero cuando uno viene ya las personas hasta cambian el número de teléfono para no ayudarle. Gracias a Dios si pasé para acá. Yo trabajaba dos turnos y me compré mi casa [en Honduras]. Y no he dejado que mi mamá sufra en nada. Me cuida a mis niños. Digamos, tiene ese trabajo de verlos a ellos.

Sometimes people that are already here get you excited. We had some cousins and one moved to New York and he told me to come, that he would pay the coyote. And I told my mom, "Mom I am going to go. I am ambitious. I want us to have a house." And my mom said she would take care of my children. I sold all of my things that had some value to pay for the ticket to come and to leave some money for my children. And I left, but when you come, people even change their phone number to not help you. Thank goodness I was able to cross. I had two jobs and I bought my house [in Honduras]. And I made sure my mother didn't lack anything. She takes care of my children. We can say, that's her job, to care for them.

¡Hay no! Yo no le puedo… (crying)… el sufrimiento no tiene límites para uno… (crying). ¡Hay no! ¡Qué horrible! Cuando me iba a venir uno se tiene que armar de mucho, pero mucho valor. Yo me acuerdo que cuando ya me venía yo no me quise quedar en la casa esa noche, me quedé con unas tías. No tiene que voltear uno pa' tras… Eso es… eso es el daño más grande que uno puede recibir (crying) sí porque… yo no dormía… yo cuando llegué acá… (crying, long pause) solo pensaba en mis niños… estaban chiquititos. Y viera la angustia que uno pasa (crying). Este… Yo luego… después de un tiempo yo… Me deprimía mucho. El sueño de mucha gente es estar acá pero ahora el mío es regresar. Pero ahora pienso también en estos dos niños que tengo aquí porque ellos nacieron acá. Digo yo, si me regreso allá ellos no… ellos no van a tener la misma vida allá. Pero es tan difícil cuando uno se viene [crying, long pause]. No todas las personas tenemos la fortuna de llegar con vida. Muchas de las personas pos' ya no regresan porque a veces los matan en México por robarles. Les pasan muchas cosas en los desiertos pero, hay no… no… creo yo que el sufrimiento más grande es cuando uno tiene niños. Los niños… (crying) ¡Hay no! Es algo tan difícil. El niño que dejé chiquito no me conoce pero siento que me quiere tanto (original emphasis). Yo nunc

perdí comunicación con ellos. Es el más cariñoso. Y me dice, "ya vente mamá, ya no te estés más allá". Es bien duro, bien difícil.

Oh my! I cannot… (crying)… the suffering is endless for you… (crying). Oh, my! It's horrible! When I decided to come, you have to be very, very strong. I remember that when I was leaving, I didn't want to stay in my house that night. I stayed with my aunts instead. You must not look behind… That's… that's the worst thing that could ever happen to you (crying) yes because… I couldn't sleep at night… when I came here… (crying, *long pause*) I would only think about my children. They were so little. You should see the anguish one feels (crying). Um… Then I… after a while I… I got depressed a lot. The dream a lot of people have it's to be here, but mine is now to go back. But now I think about these two children that were born here. I say, If I go back they don't… they won't have the same life there. But it's so hard when one leaves…(crying, *long pause*). Not all people are fortunate enough to make it alive. Many people never go back because they get killed in Mexico, when they try to rob them. A lot of things happen to them in the dessert, but my goodness… no…I think the suffering is even bigger when you have children. The children… (crying) Oh, my! It's so hard. My son that was a baby when I left doesn't know me, but I feel that he loves me *so much*. I never lost contact with them. And he tells me, "why don't you come mom, don't be there anymore." It's *really* hard, very difficult.

Erika

It really surprised me when Erika told me one day that she wanted to be in my study. Erika was so quiet and reserved that I would have not even ventured to ask her. It was through another of my participants that she learned about the interviews and the research. She made it very clear that she would meet with me and share her life as well, but she would not meet in a group with other mothers –even if she knew them. After having known me for two years, Erika knew that I would not share with anybody anything about our conversations. When I gave her the option of writing in a journal, she declined the offer and said, *No, qué si me lo encuentran mis hijos. No mejor así no'más platicamos,* or "No, what if my children find [the journal]. Let's just get together to chat." Erika was an avid

school volunteer. Later, I would find out that she learned to volunteer at school by following her mother's example. Erika was esteemed amongst the other mothers and was deemed as a person who did not like to gossip or talk about other people. A hardworking woman, Erika started selling food plates for school personnel on Fridays. Later, she started working with an acquaintance cleaning houses. Erika and I met three times in which I recorded our conversations and took brief notes.

> *Yo soy Erika. Tengo 33 años y soy de Guanajuato, México. De niña me quedé sola muy pronto porque mi papá falleció cuando yo tenía cinco años y mi mamá nos sacó adelante a todos mis trece hermanos. Estudié hasta el 6º de primaria. Si había secundaría pero mi mamá ya no tenía forma de mandarnos a estudiar. Yo empecé a trabajar cuando tenía 10 años, hasta los 20 años que me casé. Trabajábamos en el campo cosechando las fresas, chile, cebolla, todo eso. Nosotros trabajábamos para alguien. Cuando cumplí 14 años me metí a una fábrica donde empacaban el espárrago hasta que me casé. Tengo tres niños, uno de 13 años que nació en México, y dos de ocho y cinco años que nacieron en EU. Cuando mi niño más grande tenía dos años nos venimos para EU. Nos venimos porque la mera verdad allá no nos alcanzaba. Ya teníamos un hijo y queríamos darles una vida mejor porque allá uno no completa. Y más bien es lo que nos tiene aquí porque de querernos ir desde cuando que nos hubiéramos ido. Nos detenemos por los niños.*
>
> I am Erika. I'm 33 years old and I'm from Guanajuato, Mexico. When I was little, I was left on my own at a very young age because my father died when I was 5 and my mother supported all my 13 siblings. I completed to 6th grade. There was a secondary school [in my town] but my mom didn't have the means to continue sending us to school. I started working when I was 10 years old up until I was 20 when I got married. We worked the fields harvesting strawberries, peppers, onion, all of that. We worked the land for somebody else. When I turned 14, I started working in a cannery packing asparagus until I got married. I have three children; one is 13 years old and was born in Mexico, and other two boys ages eight and five were born in the US. When my oldest son was two, we moved to the US. We came to the US because in all honesty, we didn't have enough there [to live]. We already had a child and we wanted to give him a better life because there [in Mexico] we couldn't make ends meet. That's the whole reason we continue here because if we could, we would have already gone back. We stay because of the children.

Ya tenemos 11 años aquí y desde entonces no hemos ido para nada a México. Mi familia nomás conoce a mi niño el grande. Él si quiere ir pero le digo si va para allá no va a poder regresarse. Los niños más chiquitos saben que él no puede [ir a México]. Me dicen, "Vamos con Johnny mami" y les digo que él no puede ir y me dicen "es porque él nació en México, ¿verdad?" Ellos saben que su papá y yo no podemos ir tampoco, y que si vamos ya no regresamos. Uno está aquí por sus niños. Es la esperanza que tiene uno. Ahora con eso del Acta de su sueño [Dream Act] le digo al niño más grande que ahí entra él y luego de ahí, ya somos nosotros. Es la única esperanza que nos tiene. Ojalá y el presidente [Obama] se digne a darnos algo. Hay muchos jóvenes que son inmigrantes y aspiran a una cosa grande. Ya sé que hijo mi va a poder entrar a la universidad pública aunque no tenga papeles pero, ¿qué gana con tener sus estudios…? ¿y el trabajo?

We have been here for 11 years and we have not gone back to Mexico. My family [in Mexico] has only met my oldest son. He wants to go, but I tell him that if he goes, he won't be able to come back. The younger ones know that he cannot go. They say, "Mami, we can go with Johnny" and I tell them that he can't go and they say, "It's because he was born in Mexico, right?" They know that his father and I can't go either and that if we go, we cannot come back. We are here because of our children. If we all go one day together, then it will be fine. That's the hope one has. Now with the new [DREAM Act], I tell my oldest son that he can [resolve his situation] and then we follow. That's the only hope we have. Hopefully President [Obama] would give us something. There are a lot of immigrant youth that aspire to do something big. I know that my son will be able to attend a public university even without papers, but what's the point of having an education… and what about a job?

Yo me enfado de estar sola en la casa. Por eso también me he puesto a hacer cosas para vender como bufandas y gorros tejidos, y platos de comida. Hay mucha gente tonta que hemos conocido. Hay muchachos y señores que trabajan en las yardas y tienen sus papeles. ¡Hablan español e inglés! Yo no entiendo a esa gente. No han aprovechado las oportunidades que les han dado. Cuando en realidad uno está esperando esas oportunidades. Hay señores y muchachos que trabajan ahí en donde mi esposo ellos tienen sus papeles, su seguro, todo, hablan inglés y español y ganan menos que mi esposo. Luego dicen que uno les robas los trabajos. No es que uno se los robe, es que uno le echa ganas para que le den trabajo.

I get upset about being left alone at home. That's why I started crocheting caps and scarves, and selling lunch plates. We have met really dumb people. There are a lot of men and young men that work in gardening and

they have their papers. They speak English and Spanish! We want to have that but we don't and the people that have it are fools." I can't understand those people. They have not taken advantage of the opportunities provided to them, when in fact we are waiting for those opportunities. There are people that work with my husband, and they have papers, social security, they speak English and Spanish, everything, and they earn less than my husband. Then they say that we take jobs away from them. It's not that we take jobs away from them; it's that they don't apply themselves to get a job.

Mi esposo trabaja de soldador en una fábrica cerca del aeropuerto. Él hace las - las pipas que llevan el diesel o la gasolina. Mi esposo es buen trabajador. Es estable nunca falta, ni llega tarde. Es de confianza. Siempre ha sido mi esperanza que mi esposo le diga a su patrón que le eche la mano. Por medio del trabajo lo puede pedir el patrón si él quiere. Le digo "gánatelo y haz todo lo que tú puedas. No importa que toda tu vida te la pases trabajando ahí, en agradecimiento." Tan siquiera para que uno de los dos tenga papeles así podemos hasta arreglar al niño más grande. Le digo a mi esposo si me agarran pos que me echen para México y que él se quede aquí. Que venda lo poquito que tenemos y se vaya con nosotros pero si nos agarran a todos juntos, ahí se nos va a quedar lo que tenemos. Sí es difícil. Es difícil vivir en las sombras, como luego dicen, ¿por qué aquí quien lo reconoce a uno? Nadie. Aquí nosotros no somos nadie.

My husband is a welder in a factory near the airport. He builds the trucks that transport gas or diesel. My husband is a very good worker. He is very reliable, he's never absent; he is never late. He is trustworthy. It's always been my hope that my husband asks his boss to help him. His boss can legalize him through his job if he wants. I tell him, "Do everything you can to win him over. It doesn't matter that, in gratitude, you end up working there your whole life." This will allow at least one of us to have papers so we can legalize our oldest son. I tell my husband that if I get caught, I'll be sent to Mexico, and for him to stay here. He then will sell the little we have and he would join us. But if they catch us all together, everything we have will be left behind. It is difficult. It's hard to live in the shadow, like they say, because here, who acknowledges you? Nobody. Here we are nobody.

Rosa

Rosa was drawn into my project by Maria, the first mother I contacted. Rosa was not sure what we were going to be doing, but she volunteered anyhow. After I explained to her the purpose of our meetings, the study and what to expect, she agreed to work with me. I was

not able to start meeting with Rosa for almost 3 months, but once we started meeting, Rosa was always available once a week. A very personable and talkative young woman, Rosa did most of the talking during our meetings. She had so much to share and our meetings were never enough time for her to say everything she wanted. We met a total of six times. Our conversations were digitally recorded and I took minimal notes when meeting with her other than my personal impressions and thoughts. Rosa was also an active parent volunteer at the school. She was learning English and wanted to work once her 4 year-old started school. Rosa is the one who gave me the idea of incorporating journal writing in my study.

> *Yo vivía con mis papás en Honduras. Yo soy la mayor de seis hermanos, cuatro mujeres y dos hombres. Mi papá tiene 58 y mi mamá es cinco años menor que él. Mi papá trabaja el campo; siembra frijoles, maíz, y a veces lo vende. A veces tienen animales y los venden, así. Desde chiquita como de nueve o 10 años yo trabajaba. Me iba con mi abuelita a trabajar al campo. A sembrar sorgo, maíz y me pagaban poquito pero eso poquito, se los daba a mis papás. La verdad lo que yo estudié, no lo estudie porque mis papás me lo pagaron. Yo trabajé para pagarme mis estudios cuidando niños. Cuando tenía 13 años, yo me tuve que ir con alguien más a cuidar niños. A cambio que yo me fui con esas personas, ellos me dejaban que yo estudiara y yo les cuidaba sus niños.*
>
> I lived with my parents in Honduras. I am the oldest of 6 siblings, 4 women and 2 men. My father is 58 and my mother is 5 years younger. My father works the land; he plants beans, corn and sometimes he sells it. Sometimes he has animals and sells them too. I started working when I was little, like 9 or 10. I used to go with my grandmother to work in the field… to plant grains, corn, and they paid me little money, but I would give that little money to my parents. The truth is that I went to school; my parents did not pay for my education. I was a care taker and I paid my studies with that. When I was 13 years old, I went to live with somebody to take care of their children. In exchange, these people allowed me to study, and I took care of their children.
>
> *Dejé de estudiar y empecé a trabajar después de la escuela preparatoria. Por la situación de mis papás que necesitábamos dinero, mis hermanos que no tenían cosas, yo me vi obligada a ayudarlos pero no me alcanzaba. Un día desperté y le dije a mi papá, "Yo me quiero ir a*

trabajar a EU." Decía que era muy peligroso y más porque era mujer pero yo seguía y seguía. Mi papá entonces estuvo de acuerdo, y me apoyó. Aquí vivía un hermano de mi papá y mi tío me dijo que si yo me quería venir, él me ayudaba. Mi papá fue a que le prestaran dinero para poderme dar a mí para que yo me viniera. Por la garantía de ese dinero tuvo que dar su casa, los papeles de su casa. Entonces así es como me vine. Ya sabíamos de alguien que me podía traer. Tenía 19 años.

I left school and started working after preparatory school. Because of the hard situation at home with my parents needing money, my siblings that didn't have what they needed, I felt obliged to help them, but that wasn't enough. One day I woke up and I told my dad, "I want to go work in the US." He said it was dangerous and even more because I was a woman, but I kept pressing. My father agreed and he helped me. One of my father's brothers lived here and he said he would help me. My father asked for a loan so I could come. But he put his house as collateral. That's how I came. We knew of somebody who could bring me. I was 19 years old.

La verdad ahorita digo que no me arrepiento de haberme venido pero sí sufrí muchísimo. Tardé dos meses en llegar aquí; dos meses horribles. Tuve que aguantar hambre, caminar mucho, en pleno sol, mis pies ya los tenía hinchados, ya no podía caminar. Hay cosas que a veces quiero olvidar de todo lo que pasé. A veces no quiero recordarlas porque sí fue algo muy, muy feo. Lo único que no tuve que sufrir fue agresiones a mí o que me quisieran hacer algo. Cuando estaba en la frontera en México, ya mi tío no me quería ayudar porque dijo que él no tenía dinero. Entonces yo le rogué a mi tío y le dije que se lo pagaba cuando empezara a trabajar. Cuando me iban a cruzar del río, fue cuando me agarró migración. Y me tuvieron 11 días encerrada. Pensaba mi papá iba a perder su casa y si me regresó, yo no voy a poder reunir ese dinero. Después no sé que hicieron pero me dieron unos papeles para que yo me viniera para Central Texas y para ir a la corte. Yo tenía que estar yendo a corte.

Right now I can say that I do not regret having come, but I suffered very much. It took me two months to make it here; two horrible months. I suffered hunger, walked a lot, very hot, my feet were swollen and I couldn't walk anymore. There are some things that I just want to forget. Sometimes I don't want to remember them because it was bad, pretty bad. The only thing I didn't suffer were physical aggressions or somebody wanting to do something to me. When I got to the border with Mexico [and the US], my uncle did not want to help me anymore because he said that he didn't have any money. I begged him and told him I would pay him back once I had a job. Immigration caught me when I was going to cross the river. I was detained for 11 days. I thought about my father

losing his house, and thought that if I were to go back [to Honduras] I was not going to be able to save that money. I don't know what they did, but they gvme some papers to come to Central Texas and to go to court. I had to go to court.

Ahorita que tengo a mis hijos y vivo por ellos. Tengo un niño de 8 años y una niña de 4.Me interesa estar aquí por ellos. Quiero un futuro mejor para ellos. Quiero que tengan algo mejor que yo y no quiero que pasen por todo lo que yo he pasado. Ahora todo lo hago pensando en ellos no en mí. Es muy duro estar aquí porque no puedo ver a mis papás. A veces quisiera abrazarlos pero nada más puedo hablar por teléfono con ellos. Puedo ir pero no voy a poder regresar. Yo la verdad no pienso en ir. Mejor me aguanto, me quedo aquí para que mis hijos crezcan. Mis papás conocen a mis niños solo por fotos y cuando hablan por teléfono con ellos. La verdad ya casi no me acuerdo de mis hermanos porque cuando me vine, mis hermanos quedaron pequeños. Hay logros y cosas que se pierden. Hay cosas buenas y cosas malas. Mi esposo y yo tenemos un plan en caso que tengamos que irnos. Por ejemplo, si nos detuvieran a él y a mí, por decirlo así, mis niños quedarían solos. Entonces hicimos una carta que le dimos a una amiga. Ella llevaría a los niños a México porque ella si puede viajar. Sería más traumático para mis hijos si se los llevan a un lugar de esos donde llevan a los niños cuando deportan a sus papás.

Now I have my children and I live for them. My son is 8 and my daughter is 4. My interest of staying [in the US] it's because of them. I want a better future for them. I want for them to have something better than I did and I don't want for them to experience what I went through. I do everything with them in mind, not me. It's hard being here because I can't see my parents. Sometimes I wish I could hug them, but I can only speak with them by phone. I better stay for my children. My parents have seen my children only in pictures and when they talk over the phone. I honestly do not remember my siblings because they were little when I left. There are successes and losses. There are good things and bad things. My husband and I have a plan in case we have to go [out of the country.] For example, if he and I were detained, my children would not have anybody. So, we drafted a letter that we gave to a friend. She would take the kids to Mexico because she can travel. It would be more traumatic for my children if they were to take them to one of those places where they take children whose parents have been deported.

Maria

I met Maria during my first year at Vargas school. She had three children: a boy in 5th grade, a girl in 1st grade and a one-year-old girl. The older kids always looked tidy with

clean clothes and ready for the day. Silvia, her daughter, always had her hair pulled back in pony tails or braided. In Mexico, sending kids to school with clean, ironed clothes/uniforms, showered and combed hair is seen as sign of good, responsible parenting and it is a sense of pride for the family. That year, Maria won the school elections for PTA President and was constantly at the school volunteering or organizing events. When I told her about my study, she immediately volunteered herself and indicated that she would invite other mothers to participate. This was a tremendous helps. It had been challenging to gain entry into the school community at the most personal level required to do this study. It was not easy for me to simply ask people about their backgrounds to see if they would qualify for this study. Thanks to Maria, two other mothers (Rosa and Erika) became participants to this study. Although Maria and I would see each other almost daily, our interviews did not start until the end of my first year at the school. Maria also used a journal to record her thoughts and daily personal accounts. I composed Maria's narrative primarily from our interviews, but I used some of entries from her two journals and our almost daily conversations to add details and/or corroborate information.

> *Mi nombre es Maria. Tengo 34 años. Soy de México, del lado de la costa, de Acapulco. Soy la segunda de tres hermanos y la única mujer. Yo nací en un ranchito muy humilde y pequeño del estado de Michoacán donde todos se conocían. No había luz, ni agua potable, mucho menos una clínica o farmacia. Uno tenía que caminar en burro o a pié para llegar al pueblo más cercano que estaba a tres o cuatro horas. Una vez al mes llegaba el doctor para consultar. Tenía 20 años cuando me fui de mi casa "juida," el día que pidieron mi mano. Decidí juntarme con David y venirnos a emprender una vida juntos aquí en Estados Unidos.*
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> My name is Maria. I'm 34 years old. I'm from Mexico, from the coast, from Acapulco. I'm the second of three siblings and the only woman. I was born in a humble, small ranch in Michoacan where everybody knew everybody. There was neither electricity nor drinking water, much less a

clinic or pharmacy. We had to travel by donkey or by foot to the nearest town that was about three or four hours away. A doctor used to come once a month to consult patients. I was 20 years old when I eloped; it was the same day as my engagement day. I decided to join David, and come to the US to start a new life together.

Mi marido ya tenía cinco años por acá. Iba y venía. A mí se me hizo fácil porque pensé que él ya tiene experiencia. La primera vez intentamos pasar por Eagle Pass. Pasamos el río en unas llantas de plástico y nos quedamos en esa ciudad. El coyote nos recogió y nos llevó a un lugar para arreglarnos como si fuéramos a una fiesta. Me arreglaron el pelo y me dio ropa. Luego nos subió a una camioneta tipo van y nos dijo lo que teníamos que decir cuando paráramos en la garita de inspección. Unos se tenían que hacer los dormidos para que no hablaran. Éramos siete y nos agarraron por mi culpa, por no saber inglés. A mí me dejaron despierta pero estaba tan nerviosa que no me aprendí nada de lo que tenía que hacer o decir. Nos dijeron "American Citizen?" Y yo dije, "Yes." Y luego me hicieron otras preguntas y yo ya no supe que contestar. Me puse nerviosa y nos bajaron a todos. Nos agarraron. Cuando hicieron el cambio de los agentes, el que más nos gritaba se portó muy bien con David y yo. Nos dijo a qué horas y qué días se podía pasar sin batallar mucho. Nos platicó que tenía una novia de donde yo soy y que por eso nos había tratado bien.

My husband had already been here five years. He would come and go as he pleased. I thought it would be easy because he already had some experience. I didn't. The first time we tried to cross, we did it through Eagle Pass. We crossed the river using tires and we stayed in that city. The smuggler picked us up and took us to a place to be fixed as if we were going to a party. They fixed my hair and gave me clothes. Then they loaded us into a van and told us what we needed to say when we stopped at the check point. Some of the people had to pretend they were sleeping so they wouldn't talk. We were seven and we were all caught because of me, because I didn't know English. I was awake, but I was really nervous and I couldn't learn what I supposed to do or say. They asked us "American citizen?" and I said, "Yes." Then they asked me other questions and I didn't know what to respond. I got nervous and they caught us. When they changed shifts, the officer who yelled at us the most was very nice to David and I. He also told us the best time and days to cross without too much trouble. He said he had a girlfriend from my hometown and that's why he treated us well.

Luego hablamos con mi cuñando que está en Houston. Él nos mandó dinero y nos fuimos por otra frontera. Ahí David se contactó con otros coyotes y nos hicieron caminar 10 horas después de pasar el río en una lancha de plástico. Al principio todo estaba bien pero el hombre que nos

llevaba se escondía con una muchacha que venía sola para abusarla. La muchacha lloraba muchísimo. Yo ya traía los pies bien hinchados, ya no quería caminar. Había otras personas en el camino pero yo quería separarme de ellos porque eran guías. Les llaman "pateros" [as in 'path'] y son los que llevan la droga. Nuestro grupo llegó al lugar donde supuestamente nos recogerían. Nos sentamos a descansar pero nos ganó el sueño. Yo me dormí arriba de mi esposo por las culebras. Estaba todo bien oscuro. Nos despertó el ruido del helicóptero, los perros, y todos asustados empezaron a correr. Y el hombre que nos llevaba y la muchacha ya no estaban. Nos dijeron que alzáramos las manos. Y la gritadera de todos. A mí me dio harto miedo cuando uno de la inmigración ya le iba a dar a mi esposo con la escopeta en la cara. Ya que, ya estábamos ahí, ya no se podía.

Then, we phoned my brother-in-law who lives in Houston. He sent us money and he went to another port of entry. There, David contacted other smugglers and they made us walk for 10 hours after we crossed the river in a plastic boat. At first everything was fine, but the man taking us would hide [in the bushes] with a girl who was traveling alone and abused her. The girl cried a lot. My feet were very swollen and I didn't want to walk anymore. There were other people along the way, but I didn't want to be associated with them because they were guides. They call them "pateros" [from 'path'] and they are the ones who smuggle drugs. Our group arrived at the place where they were supposedly going to pick us up. We sat to rest, but fell fast asleep. I slept on top of my husband [as protection] because of the snakes. It was very dark. The noise of the helicopter and the dogs, woke us up. And everybody scampered. And the man who was taking us and the girl were gone. They told us to put our hands in the air. Everybody was screaming. I was very afraid when immigration officers were going to hit my husband in the face with their rifle. There was no way out. It didn't matter anymore; we couldn't do it anymore.

Cuando por fin pasamos fue porque hicimos lo que nos dijo el agente de migración. Nos dijo, "Cuando vayan a conseguir un coyote hablen con él, mírenlo a los ojos, y si ven que desde un principio está nervioso, ese coyote lo que más le importa es la droga, no Uds. A Uds. que les pase lo que les pase". Ellos sólo quieren pasar la droga porque sacan más dinero. Y era lo que hacían. Nomás iban, cruzábamos el río y nos dejaban por donde sabían que pasaba la inmigración para que se entretuviera con nosotros y no los agarrara a ellos. Platicamos como con tres coyotes y por fin, a las dos de la tarde, como nos dijo el de inmigración, pasamos. Del otro lado del río estaba una tienda, nos metimos ahí, después llegó el carro que nos iba a recoger y, ¡vámonos! Nos subimos todos apretados en un carro y hasta San Antonio paramos para estirarnos.

When we finally crossed [to this side] was because we did what the [first] immigration agent told us. He said, "When you go to get a *coyote*, talk with him, look him in the eye, and if you see that he is nervous, what he cares about most it's the drug, not you. He doesn't care what happens to you. They just want to smuggle drugs because they make more money. And that's what they did to us. They would just help us cross the river, and they left us where they knew immigration could find us. That way immigration would get distracted with us [and the smugglers] would get away. We talked with three *coyotes*, and finally at 2:00 in the afternoon, like the immigration officer told us, we crossed. There was a store nearby and we went in there. Later, our pick-up car arrived and we left. We were all crammed in a car and didn't stop until San Antonio where we stopped to stretch.

Un sábado mi marido venía de una reunión con amigos del fútbol. Eran las 11 de la noche y le fallaba una luz al carro y se bajó para arreglarla. Un policía se paró a preguntarle qué pasaba y le dijo que olía a alcohol. Lo agarraron y se lo llevaron, y él que no tiene papeles. Luego, luego le dijeron, "¡Para México!" Yo no tenía ningún teléfono de ningún amigo, del patrón, ni nada. Por el Internet me puse a busca. Primero, hablé al consulado de México, dije, ellos me van a ayudar. ¡Son más rateros, eso es lo que son! Por cada pregunta de asesoría legal me querían cobrar 30 dólares. Eso era mucho y entonces me puse a buscar información en la computadora. Mi hijo de 13 años era mi traductor. Mi esposo me decían que estaban haciendo que los detenidos firmaran papeles. Y yo le decía que por nada del mundo firmara. En cada puesto de detención les piden que firmen y así le hacen hasta que llegan a la frontera. No los pueden obligar a firmar porque tiene derecho a apelar. Cuando firman, es su salida voluntaria del país, la deportación voluntaria. Si él tiene chance con un abogado o algo, ya no puede hacer nada porque ya firmó.

One Saturday night that my husband was coming home after a get-together with his soccer team. It was 11:00 p.m. and one of the taillights of the car wasn't working, so he stopped to fix it. A police officer stopped to ask him what was going on and told him he smelled alcohol. The police officer made him take the breathalyzer test and they took him with them, without having any papers! Right away they told him, "Back to Mexico!" I didn't have any phone numbers of his friends, his boss, nobody. I started searching through the Internet… ah! I called the Mexican Consulate and they said they could help me. They are only a bunch of thieves! They were going to charge me 30 dollars for each legal question I had. That was way too much money so I decided to search information in the computer. My 13-year-old son was my translator. My husband said that they were making the detainees to sign papers. I told him not to sign anything. At each detention center, they tell them to sign, and they do this all the way they get to the border. They cannot make them sign. They have the right to

appeal the deportation. Signing means they are voluntarily leaving the country. So, if he has any chance [to stay], a lawyer can't really help him because he [relinquished his appeal] by signing those papers.

Me conseguí tres abogados. Uno me pidió los papeles de los niños, si teníamos propiedades, si pagábamos al IRS. Mi esposo ya estaba desesperado. Gracias a Dios no tiene mal récord de nada desde que llegó aquí hace como 16 años. Con todo ese tiempo y ninguna felonía, mi esposo calificó para una nueva ley que les permite arreglar papeles. Es una ley que dice que si un detenido ha estado en el país un mínimo de 10 años, no tiene mal record, es buen trabajador y buen contribuyente de EU, puede calificar para arreglar sus papeles. Ahora si vamos a poder arreglar. Yo digo, no hay mal que por bien no venga. Lo primero para lo que calificó fue para su permiso de trabajo y su licencia. Ya tuvo una cita en la inmigración y ahí le van a dar su permiso de trabajo. ¡Yo no lo podía creer! Mis niños andan bien contentos también.

I found three lawyers. One of them asked me for my children's paperwork, property papers and IRS paperwork. My husband was desperate. Fortunately, he doesn't have a criminal record since he arrived about 16 years ago. With all that time and no felonies, my husband qualified under a new law that allows them to correct their [legal status]. It's a law that says that if a detainee has been in the country for more than 10 years, he's a good worker and pays taxes; he can qualify to get papers. We are going to be able to fix our papers. I say, "There's no wrong that is not followed by good." (Every cloud has a silver lining.) The first thing he qualified for was his work permit and his driving license. He already had his appointment with Immigration and they are going to give him work permit. I couldn't believe it! My children are very happy too!

Mariana

I met Mariana during my second year at Vargas Elementary. I approached her because her daughter, Dulce, was constantly seen by the nurse. She explained to me about her doctor visits and Dulce's anxiety in a new classroom, with a new teacher. She later came to see me again to ask me if I could talk with her daughter because she was having a hard time at school. Mariana suspected that Dulce's stomach aches were an excuse to attend class. Dulce did not feel comfortable with her new teacher and she was also just recovering from her stepfather's deportation. Unlike my other mothers, Mariana speaks

English because she came to the US at the age of 15 and attended high school for a little over a year. She also has a small cleaning business that has helped her support herself and her daughter. Mariana adds to my data set another perspective in the spectrum of immigrant mothers. She was born in Mexico, but in a sense became an adult in the U.S. Yet, she sees herself as a Mexican immigrant and has strong ties with Mexico. In addition, she is the only one of my participants whose mother lived in the U.S. (before leaving and being deported) at one point. Sharing experiences about life in the US is critical for the understanding of motives of self-sacrifice and endurance that immigrant mothers go through.

> *Me llamo Mariana y tengo 28 años. Tengo una niña que está en 3er grado. Soy de Acapulco, México. Tuve a mi hija Dulce cuando tenía 20 años. Dulce había cumplido cinco años cuando él se fue para México. Con mi actual pareja tengo dos años viviendo juntos. Se siente la armonía en la casa. Se siente la ayuda del hombre, los tres, la estabilidad para la niña también. Ahorita limpio casas por mi cuenta. Es mi propio negocio. Me va más o menos bien. Me varia el número de casas a la semana a veces me cancelan. Es un trabajo un poco cansado. Los químicos afectan demasiado.*
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> My name is Mariana and I'm 28 years old. I have a girl who is in 3rd grade. I'm from Acapulco, Mexico. I had my daughter Dulce when I was 20 years old. I was pregnant but I didn't feel motivated to get together with her father. Dulce turned five when he left to Mexico. I've been living together with my current partner for two years. There's harmony in the house. We have the help of a man, the three of us; stability for my daughter too. Right now I am self employed cleaning houses. It's my own business. It's an okay job. The number of houses [I clean] varies by week; sometimes. The chemicals we use really hurt you.
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> *Tenía 15 años cuando me vine para acá. Estuve aquí en la escuela hasta casi terminar el grado 11. Mi mamá ya había estado tres años aquí. Fue para mis 15 años y me trajo. Mi motivación de venirme para acá fue estar con mi mamá. Yo vivía como pelotita con mis hermanas. Mi hermana la más grande me ponía a lavar las colchas, a planchas los uniformes de todos, a hacer las comidas, y nomás tenía 13 años. Hacía las tareas hasta más noche por hacer el quehacer de la casa. Cuando me vine estaba muy chavilla. Cuando pasé en aquel entonces no fue muy frustrante. Me pasé*

como una aventura yo. Iba corriendo entre el monte y pasé en Piedras Negras abajo del puente. Decían "Agáchense" Y yo risa y risa, o sea, no miraba el impacto de lo que estaba pasando. Yo nada más iba corriendo. Venía con mi madre, dos hermanos, mi sobrino tenía como nueve meses. Veníamos pura familia. Nos venimos como ocho y el guía y su esposa. Si nos pasamos. Extraño a mi familia. Allá tengo a mis hermanas, a mis sobrinas que tengo 13 años sin verlas. A mi padre tengo tres años sin verlo.

I was 15 years old when I came to [the US]. I studied here almost until 11th grade. My mom had been here for three years. She went for my 15th birthday and she brought me with her. My motivation to be here was to be with my mother. I used to bounce off from one sister's house to another. My oldest sister used to put me to wash blankets, iron her children's uniforms, cook, and I was only 13 years old. I had to do homework late at night, after doing housework. When I came [to the US] I was a teen. When I crossed [the border] back then, it was not very frustrating. I thought of it as an adventure. I ran through the field, under the bridge in Piedras Negras. They said, "All down!" … and I laughed and laughed, that is, I wasn't aware of the impact of what was happening. I was just running. I was with my mother, two brothers; my nephew was about nine months old. It was just our family. It was about eight of us, the guide and his wife. We made it. I miss my family. My sisters are there; I miss my nieces whom I haven't seen in 13 years. I haven't seen my father in three years.

Él que sufrió mucho fue mi marido. Casi se estaba muriendo. Cruzaron el río por Reynosa en una cámara de llanta. Caminaron en el día y le dio insolación, como que se estaba deshidratando[30]. No podía respirar, se le resecó la garganta y comenzó a temblar, los escalofríos. Esa noche que él se puso bien malo, dijo que un señor lo tuvo abrazado toda la noche hasta que sudara. Ahora dice que si le vuelve a pasar y lo regresan, le va a pensar si se arriesga a venirse o no. De hecho, nadie sabe más que yo y ahora se lo estoy contando a Ud. Tuvo varios días muy seguidos teniendo pesadillas después que llegó. Se despertaba todo sudado soñando que le quitaban su familia, lo regresaban para México, que se moría. Tampoco me quería contra nada a mí hasta que se soltó a llorar y se deshago. Los hombres que se quieren hacer fuertes y todo eso, ellos también sufren, si sienten. Mi hija y yo batallamos bastante. En lo emocional más que nada, y ya después en lo económico. Él tiene su papá, dos hermanos y primos pero nadie nos ayudó. Nomás unos de sus hermanos dio 200 dólares. Cuando ese hermano se había ido para México, mi esposo fue el que le pagó el coyote, el pasaje, todo, para que se devolviera. Cuando alguien me hace un favor a mí, y esa persona necesita ayuda, yo no me voy a esperar a que me lo diga, yo me ofrezco.

[30] Her husband tried crossing the border in the summer of 2011, when there was an extreme drought and heat in the region.

My husband is the one who suffered a lot. He was dying. They crossed the border through Reynosa in a car tire. They walked during the day and he suffered from heat stroke; he kind of dehydrated. He couldn't breath; his throat was dry and he started to shiver. The night he got really sick, he said that a man [from the group] hugged him all night long so my husband could break a sweat. He now says that if he gets caught again and is deported, he will think it twice before risking coming to the US again. In fact, nobody knows [about this], and know you know [because I am sharing it with you]. He had nightmares in the days after he came back. He would wake up all sweaty dreaming that they took his family away from him, that he was sent back to Mexico and that he died. He didn't want to tell me anything until he opened up crying and he felt relieved. Men pretend they are very strong and that, but they also suffer… they also have feelings. My daughter and I had a very difficult time. First it affects you emotionally, and then financially. Only one of his brothers donated $200. When that particular brother went to Mexico, my husband was the one who paid the coyote, the trip, everything, so he could come back. When somebody makes me a favor, and that person needs help, I don't wait to be asked to help; I volunteer [to help] on my own.

Desde que salió de su casa, duró una semana en una casa en Reynosa hasta que pudiera tocarle el viaje a él porque se juntaban muchos. Salieron 12 de la casa pero caminaron una noche. Parece que venían como 30 personas en total. Salió un sábado en madrugada como a las cinco o seis y llegó a McAllen como a las 10 de la noche. De ahí me mandó un texto porque se trajo un teléfono de México. De ahí duró como 4 días. Salieron en la madrugada y caminaron parte del día, y toda la noche como tres días y dos noches. Después de que caminan, los recogen en la carretera en un cierto lugar. Iban en una troca y se acostaron todos en la caja y le ponen una lona de plástico encima. Dice que el conductor manejaba bien feo; cada que arrancaba o frenaba se juntaba todos. Si no los agarraron en la pasada, los hubieran agarrado por la forma de manejaba. Por cruzar el puro río son 200 y ya cuando lo entregan son 1800. La primera señora que lo iba a cruzar nos cobraba 3500. Le mandé la mitad, y lo agarraron y perdí ese dinero. Otra vez a juntar y yo sola con los gastos, la renta. Fue difícil. Al deportar a una persona que ya tiene familia no nada más afecta a la persona que mandan, también a los que se quedan aquí.

Since he left his house, he spent a week in a house in Reynosa until it was his turn because there were a lot [of people] waiting. Twelve of them left the house [in a group] and they walked one night. I think there were about 30 people all together. He started [the journey] on a Saturday around 5 or 6 in the morning and they arrived at McAllen around 10 a.m. He sent me a text from there because he had a phone from Mexico. From there it lasted

about 4 days. They left at dawn and walked part of the day and all night for about 3 days and 2 nights. After [the group] walks, somebody picks them up in the highway in a certain spot. A truck picked them up. Everybody laid down in the truck's bed, and they put a tarp on top of them. My husband said that the driver was driving recklessly. Every time that the truck stopped or accelerated, all the people gathered together. If they were not caught at the border, they would have been caught because of the way the man was driving. It's $200 dollars to cross the river, and when they deliver [the person], it's 1800. The first lady that was going to help us cross him wanted $3500 dollars. I sent her half, but they caught him and I lost that money. I had to save again, and I was alone with all the house expenses, the rent. It was hard. When they deport a person that has a family, it does not only affect the person they are sending back, but also the ones that stay here.

Dulce sabía de todo esto por lo que estábamos pasando. De hecho, se ponía a platicar don Dios y le pedía que la inmigración no los fuera ver. Detalles no, sabía por ejemplo, que llegó lastimado por caminar pero no todo lo otro. Ella no tiene una idea de todo esto que le cuento. Dulce no sabe lo que es cruzar. Nunca ha ido a México. No conoce la frontera. Creo que si le afectó mucho. Trató de ocultármelo pero se hizo muy sensible. En la escuela lloraba todos los días, decía que le dolía el estómago. La lleve al doctor varias veces pensando que tenía alguna infección, le dieron medicina, y nada. Ahora piensa que de todo se va a morir. Me pregunta que si le duele su panza se puede morir. Tengo que buscar ayuda psicológica. Ahorita estamos pasando una situación muy difícil con otra hermana que está enferma y le dijeron que tiene un mes de vida. La situación está muy tensa y yo creo que por eso Dulce ha agarrado de pensar que se puede morir. Otra casa que le afectó mucho fue ir a ver a mi mamá al centro de detención. Verla detrás de un vidrio, con ropa diferente. Decía que su abuelita no había matado a nadie, que no había robado nada que porqué la tenían ahí. Día tras día le empecé a explicar cosas y creo que lo entendió. Yo trato que no escuche tantas conversaciones de lo que pasa pero pues es parte de la familia todo esto, o a veces las primitas le cuentan.

Dulce knew of all this that we were going through. In fact, she talked to God and asked that immigration officers would not see them. She didn't know the details, for example she knew that he was hurt because he had to walk, but not the rest. She has no idea of all this that I'm telling you. Dulce does not know what crossing entails. She has never gone to Mexico. She has never been to the border. I think it really affected her a lot. She tried to hide it, but she became very sensitive. At school, she cried every day saying that her stomach hurt. I took her to the doctor several times thinking that she had an infection; they gave her medicine, and nothing. She now thinks that she can die of anything. She asks me if she can die

> from stomach ache. Another thing that affected her a lot was when she went to see my mother at the detention center in… see her through a glass with different clothes [tears in her eyes]. She said that her grandmother had not killed anybody. She had not stolen anything, why did they have it there. Little by little I started explaining things and I think she understood. I try for her not to hear so many of these conversations, but all of this is part of our family, or sometimes [her older] cousins tell her.

Conclusion

As much as I theorized at the beginning of this study about being an insider in the immigrant community, I came to the realization that my privilege as a graduate student, educator, researcher, English-speaker, *con papeles*, comes with an inevitable authority and power that my participants do not have access to. It was me who designed the study, who asked the questions, who selected the books to read to children, who guided the conversations and who ultimately manipulated the data (Lather, 2007). I questioned my own moral stance in all of this. Because I share some of the immigrant experiences, I also had to be careful not to be over analytical or become enamored of the data. As Lather (2007) points out, "if we say we are going to study so-and-so then let's make sure that the focus is on so-and-so, not to leave our stories out, but to contain them and milk them for what they can add to the depth of analysis" (p.30). In other words, I had to accept that my personal filters and my insider/outsider stances are always (and will always be) present and that as such my "expertise" in the area is a strength rather than a weakness.

Reconstructing the mother narratives was not an easy task. Their stories were charged with so much information. The narratives remain true to the participants' words, including their choice of words in Spanish that denote particular regionalisms. I set out to find out mothers' efforts to promote cultural and traditional practices in the home and found instead narratives full of emotion. Their stories reflect the complex lives of real people among us that go beyond a study on identity and what we can learn from them to

support children of immigrants in our schools. By including this chapter on undocumented immigrant mothers, I intend to present their humanity, preoccupations, and stories of strength and perseverance.

The following chapter will focus on the findings in this chapter. I use Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth as my lens to analyze and discuss salient themes of my data on immigrant mothers. I also present my own contribution to the field on what I have termed, Immigrant Cultural Wealth (ICW). Yosso's framework was too limiting for my study on immigrant populations. Thus, based on my findings, a new category emerged that is unique to immigrant populations that inhabit the borderland (Anzaldúa, 1997), emotionally and mentally.

VI. LEARNING FROM UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT MOTHERS

Introduction

This chapter serves as a portal into the lives of my participants. Each meeting, each interview, and each exchange I had with my participants was charged with emotion and feelings. Our conversations were very intimate, and we became accomplices with a shared understanding and a history in common. As the administrator of the school where their children attended, I used to see my participants almost daily, but our conversations in these public spaces were never related to our private talks. My child participants also behaved differently when they saw me at school and when we gathered in our meetings. It was almost like a secret code. By allowing me a glimpse into their lives, worlds, and identity production, they gave me the privilege of becoming part of this process too. The privilege to have worked with such strong women has been a very humbling experience for me. I will never forget when my participant Elizabeth told me about the children she left in Honduras. I can still see her sitting on the floor holding her baby, crying and choking on her own words as she shared her immeasurable pain of leaving her children behind.

Chapter VI presents some of the findings identified after individual interviews with each adult participant. Their narratives were transcribed, entered into a spreadsheet, and coded. Through this process, a major unexpected theme related to agency emerged. Within this theme, subthemes arose that allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the participants' agency. Each theme and subtheme was determined after reviewing transcripts and noting a combination of frequency in the topic and the level of description and commentary provided by study participants. I identified the most significant quotes

related to those themes and provided an analysis of how immigrant mothers from Mexico and Central America exercise and foster their agency.

To what extent do the immigrant mothers in the figured world of the US author the selves in empowering ways? Without a doubt, much of the influence the US environment had on the immigrant mothers in this study was contingent on the background and experiences they brought with them. Through the mothers' stories, I was able to identify themes that speak about strong, defined, agentic selves. Themes that ran across their stories parallel the forms of community cultural wealth identified by Yosso (2005). The notion of community cultural wealth is particularly relevant for my study because it deems the knowledge and cultural capital of people of color as valid and relevant for analyzing their oppression and racialization. However, Yosso's notion of cultural wealth proved to be too rigid for analyzing my findings about undocumented immigrant mothers. Their lived experiences provide for immigrant populations a unique set of knowledge, which in turn produce a different way to resist, navigate, communicate, aspire, maneuver social institutions, relate with family and practice culture. Therefore I developed a new framework to analyze and discuss the cultural capital that immigrant populations possess. I have named this new framework Immigrant Cultural Wealth (ICW) or *Riqueza Cultural del Inmigrante*. I decided to use in Spanish the word "riqueza" because *riqueza* refers to richness, which better addresses values and capacities cultivated by immigrants. First, I will explain the themes directly related to agency of the immigrant mothers. Then, I will discuss Immigrant Cultural Wealth and explain the salient capitals and subthemes across the data set, including how these new capitals relate to community cultural wealth.

Presentation of Findings

I explore each of these research questions in this chapter with a particular focus on research questions two and three. From these collective questions, I determined the participants' agency and what factors and personal characteristics contribute to this development.

2. How do undocumented mothers' immigration experiences influence children's self identification and the development of an ethnic identity?

3. How do immigration experiences foster agency among undocumented mothers from Mexico and Central America?

Immigrant Mothers – Agency

Whether knowingly or not at the time, immigrant mothers took a huge risk by leaving everything behind in hopes of a better future for their families. Moving from their country of origin to the US has presented new opportunities for them, although not necessarily better ones. These opportunities have not always been what they expected, and in many instances translate into giving up something, such as never being able to see their families in their home countries again. Nevertheless, these immigrant women and mothers do not lose sight of their main objective: they are here for their children. Immigrant mothers have the desire to succeed and their children are their main motivators to keep going even if it means living in the shadows as Erika, one of my participants, noted. Their children seem to be the key factor by which immigrant mothers plot their moves.

All mothers in my data set seemed to share the following characteristics: determined, hardworking, pioneering, resilient, and self-reliant. These characteristics are

not all encompassing and represent only a small group of immigrant mothers from Mexico and Central America. It is important to clarify, however, that each one of the immigrant mothers and their stories were unique. The extent of their agency in orchestrating the messages from their own life history, as well as those from the multiple worlds they inhabit, was diverse and complex. The description of agentic beings of immigrant mothers that I propose illustrates distinct characteristics. In certain cases they could be seen as phases, as they overlap in some ways and/or build on each other. Clearly, not all immigrant mothers fit this description perfectly, and I do not claim that these pathways to self-authoring are the only ones possible for immigrant mothers in the US. These are simply the most salient patterns that I observed. These patterns can be useful in understanding how these characteristics help empower immigrant women, as well as shed light on these women's agency. Below, I give an explanation for each personal trait and illustrate those with examples from the mother narratives.

Determined

Leaving one's country to start anew in a strange place, with a different language and values, is not a decision that can be taken lightly. Immigrant mothers, however, take the risk in order to accomplish their goals. Whether driven by poverty or the need to help their families, immigrant women in this study made the decision to travel *al norte*, or to the US. Elizabeth, for example, wanted a house for her mother and a better future for her children in Honduras. Rosa decided to leave her small town in Honduras to help her father support their family. Her goal was to find a job and send money back to her family in Honduras. Maria, Mariana and Erica had family reunification as the motivation to immigrate to the US. Mariana, on the other hand, wanted to be with her mother after

being left under the care (and abuse) of her older sisters for a few years. Erika's goals were to provide a better future for her baby son and at the same time be with her husband.

Before coming to the US, all of these immigrant women had a goal in their minds. The goal motivated them to plan their journey and take the next step, whether alone or with company. To achieve this goal, they were willing to give up the warmth of their homes, the hugs of loved ones and the sounds of the familiar. Women in my study had an idea of how difficult crossing the Río Bravo would be for them, yet that did not intimidate them. The journey from Central America to the US is a treacherous one; one that is plagued with violence and deceit. Rosa and Elizabeth had to travel through Guatemala and Mexico to reach the US border. Although traveling to Guatemala was not very difficult for them, traveling through Mexico was challenging. With no passport or permit to enter either country, they became undocumented immigrants the moment they left Honduras.

Hardworking

Some of the mothers in this study migrated to the US in search of a job. Erika, Elizabeth, and Rosa were looking for a better paying job that would support their families back home. They were all employed before coming to the US. Like Erika who at age 10 worked in the fields, these mothers started to work at a young age. If they did not have formal employment, they worked at home like Mariana who had to help cook, do the wash and other chores at home. After studying cosmetology, Maria set up a small beauty salon in her house to earn money. All my participants were women trying to better themselves and their families through an honest job. Once in the US, these immigrant mothers worked long hours to earn enough money to send to their families and to support

themselves in the US. Because one of their main goals in coming to the US was to earn money, these women were not intimidated by long work hours or poor working conditions. Rosa and Elizabeth recounted having at least two jobs at a time and working 40 to 60 hours a week. After dropping out of high school, Mariana worked in a factory. She later started her own house-cleaning business, a job that has supported her and her daughter for more than 10 years.

Contrary to the women who traveled alone or had no partner, Maria and Erika traveled with their partner or husband. Once in the US, the men provided for their family and the women worked at home and took care of the children. This situation allowed them to volunteer at their children's school. After Rosa got married and had children, she also stayed home and volunteered at her children's school. In the case of Mariana, a single mother, she had to continue working to support herself and her daughter. Elizabeth started a relationship with another man in Central Texas, but she continued to work so she could send money to her children in Honduras.

Trailblazers

These women made their own decisions for a better life for themselves and for their families, and walked a path they had never walked before. Maria, Erika, and Mariana traveled with a relative (husband/boyfriend, mother), while the others came alone with nobody waiting for them in the US. Rosa and Elizabeth traveled alone all the way from Honduras. When Rosa arrived in the US, she found some assistance from a reluctant uncle who had encouraged her, but changed his mind at the last minute. Elizabeth ended up staying with the people who helped her cross the border. Rosa and

Elizabeth had no acquaintances or relatives in Mexico or Guatemala to stay with or ask for assistance.

The three mothers from Mexico (Maria, Erika and Mariana) had some sort of network that assisted them in getting acclimated after their arrival. Maria came with her fiancée, but even that was a new setting for her since they had never lived together before. Erika, who came with her husband and baby, and Mariana, who traveled with her mom and siblings, were the only ones who had a more stable network formed by close relatives. Above all, these women left everything behind to start a new life in a strange place. The hope for a better future motivated them to move forward although realizing this was uncertain.

Resilient

Resiliency is often defined as being able to bounce back. It is said that a person is resilient when she or he is able to start again after a difficult situation or event. Resiliency is one of the themes I anticipated due to my previous research and work with immigrants (Godínez, 2006). In spite of adversity, the immigrant mothers in my study show evidence of having the capability to keep going. In the case of Elizabeth, she was able to redefine her life in order to provide for her children after her husband left them in Honduras. Rosa found herself sharing a bedroom with her uncle, something not many young adults would be willing to do. Instead of giving up and going back to Honduras, Rosa kept on looking for work to help her family. She also shared that journaling helped her cope with the stress and trauma associated with her journey to the US. Falicov (2002) describes this posttraumatic phase experienced by immigrants as mourning, similar to the death of a close relative. Likewise, Maria provided a strong example of resiliency and tenacity.

After several fruitless attempts at crossing the border, Maria finally succeeded. Once in the US, she experienced acute fear of deportation and secluded herself in her apartment for several months. Years later, she became an active parent volunteer at her children's school, eventually becoming PTA president.

Self-reliant

The data also shows evidence that immigrant mothers in this study relied on themselves primarily for taking care of their own needs. Being independent and self-sufficient were characteristics that they developed before migrating to the US. Here in the US, these women have also learned new ways to be independent in order to support their families. They learned to drive to transport themselves and their families to school, the doctor, and the store. Rosa's story about learning to drive is perhaps typical of many immigrant mothers who find themselves forced to acquire a new skill. The majority of working class people in Latin American countries rely on public transportation. Owning a vehicle is almost exclusively for wealthier people. Thus, knowing how to drive is not necessarily a given as it is in the US. As mothers in charge of the house and children, these women have also learned how to find medical assistance, how to rent an apartment, and how to enroll children in school; all this in a brand new country with a brand new set of rules (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006).

In the following section, I will discuss and explain the salient themes and subthemes across the data set related to community cultural wealth. I will also explain a new type of cultural wealth that emerged in this study and that I have termed Immigrant Cultural Wealth (ICW) or *Riquieza Cultural del Inmigrante*.

Immigrant Cultural Wealth (ICW): *Riquieza Cultural del Inmigrante*

According to Yosso (2005), community cultural wealth specifies values and capacities cultivated by Communities of Color that enable persistence and social mobility in the face of significant obstacles. Such resources and values are often overlooked in widely used analyses of cultural capital and social mobility that tend to frame Communities of Color and other marginalized populations as merely deficient with respect to a constructed norm (Bordieu & Passeron, 1977). In doing so, such analyses obscure resources that are produced, deployed and could be further engaged. Yosso (2005) has identified six types of community cultural wealth:

- Resistant capital: challenge inequity and/or subordination
- Linguistic capital: communicate through different languages and/or styles
- Navigational capital: maneuver social institutions
- Social capital: utilize social networks and/or community resources
- Familial capital: preserve cultural and/or family knowledge and histories
- Aspirational capital: ability to have aspiration and/or hope despite challenges

Yosso's community cultural wealth (2005) has been pivotal for the development and analysis of this study. Although at different levels, I was able to identify most of Yosso's strands in my data. Some of these capitals overlapped at times or did not fully assist me in analyzing my findings. There was something else characteristic of immigrant populations that in my view was not being addressed by the current strands in community cultural wealth. We, immigrants, have a unique lens through which we view and position ourselves in the world. Our dual frame of reference (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco,

1995b), experiences and struggles provide us with a different mindset that allows us to see things from a new perspective. Yosso's framework proved to be too limiting when studying immigrant populations.

Immigrant mothers' narratives spoke of real people, living real and complex, transnational lives in the US and in their home countries, at a distance. The particular activities and needs of immigrants need to be analyzed from their unique positions that intersect legal status, the physical border or relying on new, temporary acquaintances. These unique characteristics that emerge among immigrants generate a new set of strengths in this particular population. Specifically, I am referring to how immigrants discover new strengths in critical events or how they develop new survival mechanisms to cope with their contradictory and ambivalent situation as undocumented immigrants in the US. Therefore, a new type of capital emerged through this study. Immigrant Cultural Wealth or *Riquieza Cultural del Inmigrante* is the name I gave to this new cultural wealth. *Riquieza* (wealth in Spanish) emphasizes the notion of the richness of knowledge immigrants possess in different areas that allows them to survive and move forward in the face of significant obstacles as (un)documented immigrants. My cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) as an immigrant and my *mestiza consciousness* (Anzaldúa, 1999) aided me in the development of this framework. The capitals related to ICW are: 1) solidarity in crossing; 2) unrealized strength, and 3) feeling trapped in the US oasis or re-authoring the selves. This last capital encompasses different areas such as language, desire to learn, and living at a distance because immigrants resist subordination and challenge inequity from using a variety of strategies.

Next, using a Chicana/Mexicana immigrant lens and using community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) as a guide, I explain immigrant cultural capital. I believe Immigrant Cultural Capital is a relevant framework to be taken in consideration when researching immigrant communities.

Solidarity in Crossing

Yosso (2005) defines social capital as networks of people and community resources and navigational capital as the skills of maneuvering social institutions. Although similar to social capital described by Yosso (2005), solidarity in crossing is unique to ICW because it is born under the special circumstances engendered by crossing the border illegally. No migration is ever done in the vacuum. All participants used some kind of networking as the main tool to plan their journey to the US. Whether it was through a relative or an acquaintance, they all knew somebody in the US who could either help them get established or who had provided enough information for them to plan their move. Networking actually starts in their home country, as immigrants inquire or get in touch with relatives who have lived or live in the US. Networking also happens in the US as immigrants try to get established and start a new life.

Crossing the border leaves indelible memories in the minds of those who experience it (Chávez, 1998). There seems to be an unspoken agreement among undocumented immigrants who cross the border without proper documentation as part of a group. They all have the same goal of crossing the border and arriving safely to their destination. For the most part, these groups are formed by individuals who get to know each other as they start their journey together. Mariana recounted that all people in her

group were relatives, but it is rare that a large group of relatives travel together at once. It is a risky practice, but people who want to cross the border unlawfully arrive at the border in Mexico to look for a *coyote* (smuggler). Immigrants ask around and find people who refer them to others or to an area in town where services can be arranged. Some who have done the trip before or who know somebody who has traveled in the past have a reference and look for somebody in particular.

The trip to cross the order can take between one to 15 days after the day that immigrants contract the services of a smuggler. Mariana reported that her boyfriend had to wait a few days for his group to depart, and that all people were housed in one location. Maria and her fiancé joined others to form a group and looked for a smuggler to cross them through the border. Rosa's family had arranged her trip for her through an acquaintance whose services consisted of taking people from Honduras to the US-Mexico border. It is during this search for a smuggler, the subsequent wait for departure, and during the journey itself that immigrants learn to rely on and support each other to a certain extent. They seem to understand very well the perils of each other's situations and thus help each other. They are also aware that smugglers do not care about them as individuals, but as profit. If anybody stays behind or gets sick, smugglers will not stop to render aid. Too much money is at play and the smugglers would rather lose a small portion of it than risk it all. After all, they have already received half of the payment for each person. In Mariana's words:

> *Mi marido me cuenta que una señora que tenía diabetes se le hincharon los pies y se quedó en el camino. Sola. Así son los coyotes; si te quedas te quedaste, ni modo. Ellos no van a perder dinero por una sola persona. Es muy difícil. El señor que ayudó a mi esposo también se quedó. Dice que apenas y podía caminar porque estaba gordito. Mi esposo trató de*

animarlo y no quiso. Se quedaban solos, cada que se cansaban se quedaban donde fuera.

> My husband told me that there was a diabetic woman who stayed behind because her feet had swollen, staying alone. That is the way the smugglers are. If you stayed behind, you stayed behind, tough. They are not going to lose money just because of one person. It's very difficult. The man that helped my husband [when he got sick] also stayed behind. He said that he could hardly walk because he was a little heavy. My husband tried to encouraged him, but he didn't want [to continue]. People stayed alone; when somebody was tired, they would stay anywhere in the path.

Group members develop a temporary sense of familial bond. Familial capital refers to the cultural and/or family knowledge and histories (Yosso, 2005). As reported by others (Yosso, 2005; Bejarano 2005; Suarez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999), familism is one of the strong characteristics among Latinos and it was no different for immigrant mothers in this study. The examples that I provide in this section allow us to observe the diverse and flexible ways in which familial capital takes form for immigrants. These could be the same for any immigrant in the US, but legal status and location adds a layer particular to undocumented immigrants.

When crossing the border in a group, older men see their own daughters and sons reflected in the faces of young immigrants and offer support and protection. Maria recalls a situation in which an older man gave her his cap to hide her long hair so people would not know she was a woman. It is not uncommon for gangs to attack groups of immigrants and take the women with them. In the same way, Elizabeth remembers how a man encouraged her to keep walking when she could not walk anymore. She recalls that the man would say: "Come on girl, don't stay behind. Let's go. If you stay behind, you'll get lost and they won't wait for you." She added that although the man had a bad leg, he offered to carry her backpack so she could catch up with the group. Mariana shared that

during her partner's crossing journey, he got extremely sick. He suffered dehydration, could not breathe, and his body temperature dropped dramatically. A man from the group hugged Mariana's partner through the night so he could regain his body temperature. Women in Mariana's partner's group also offered him Gatorade to reestablish his body fluids and physical strength.

Through these small vignettes we are able to see that undocumented immigrants become "family members" for the duration of the trip and humanize each other to the extent possible. The solidarity and familism formed among the members of the group is particular to immigrant cultural wealth (ICW) because it emerges and culminates during the event of crossing the border. Once the group crosses the border safely and arrives in the US, each immigrant continues to his or her final destination and the connection with the rest of the group members dissolves for the most part. What is left from the journey is the memory of people in the group and how they helped each other. When recounted by immigrant mothers, these memories seemed to convey a sense of belonging and mutual support. It is precisely these stories that seem to encourage new immigrants to venture to *el norte* when they hear them from other undocumented immigrants who have made the trip. Elizabeth's words evidence this assumption:

> *Yo tenía una hermana acá en Miami pero antes de yo salir de Honduras ella me dijo que no me viniera. Me dijo que no me iba a ayudar pero yo me arriesgué y me vine. Dije, de alguna otra manera Dios tiene que echarle la mano a uno y haber como pasa uno. Luego hay gente buena en el camino que le ayuda a uno.*
>
> I had a sister in Miami, but before leaving Honduras she told me not to come [to the US]. She told me she was not going to help me, but I risked myself and came anyway. I said, some way God lends us a hand and we figure out how to cross. There are always good people in the way who help you.

Elizabeth refers to a common understanding among immigrants that there will be someone, a stranger, along the way who will help them. It also speaks of the positive stance immigrants take when deciding to migrate to the US. They are aware that the trip will be risky and uncertain, but somehow these stories of solidarity when crossing ameliorate their anxiety about their unknown journey.

Unrealized Strength

It is through the excruciating ordeal of crossing the border illegally that some of these immigrant mothers realized their true potential. Some of them faced their worst fears, but were able to succeed and now use those experiences as a symbol of their strength. Maria was scared to cross the border illegally, let alone to respond in English to an immigration officer at the check point. But she did it. They were ultimately caught and sent back to Mexico, but she believed she could do it. Elizabeth has an extreme fear of heights. She had to be very brave to climb fences during her crossing. In her own words,

> *Yo le tengo mucho miedo a las alturas. Yo no me subo a un árbol. Yo le tengo pavor así como ver de un puente para abajo. [Cuando veníamos], yo me subía a las cercas de alambre con los ojos cerrados. Yo decía, "Hay Dios mío ayúdame," porque lo dejan a uno ahí. Es que uno tiene que agarrar valor. Las ganas de sobrevivir que le dan a uno… le dan a uno… le quitan el miedo a uno.*
>
> I'm afraid of heights. I can't even get on a tree. I get frightened just to look down from a bridge. [When crossing], I climbed the fences with my eyes closed. I would say, "Please God help me" because they would leave you there. You have to gather courage. The willingness to survive gives you… gives you… it takes your fear away.

Elizabeth knew that if she did not climb the fences, she would be left behind in the desert. Her strategy of closing her eyes while climbing paid off and allowed her to realize she

was capable of doing what she needed to do. Rosa gives us perhaps the best example of how immigrant mothers are able to transform a traumatic experience into strength for life.

> *Yo misma me sorprendo y digo, si fui capaz de hacer eso, puedo ser capaz de hacer muchas cosas más buenas. Porque fui capaz de hacer todo eso que me pasó, pude sobrevivir y llegué aquí. Es como cuando me enseñé a manejar que el miedo no me dejaba. Comparándolo no es nada con lo que yo viví. Siempre que yo voy a hacer algo, me recuero de ese momento, si yo fui capaz de hacer eso, soy capaz de hacer esto. Mi experiencia me cambió la manera de pensar.*
>
> It surprises me and I say, if I was able to do that, then I am able to do many other better things. Because I was able to succumb to all that happened to me [when crossing], I survived and I am here. It's like when I was learning to drive and the fear paralyzed me. If I compare both things, driving is nothing compared with what I experienced. Every time I am going to do something, I remember those times; if I was able to do that, then I am able to do this. My experience changed my way of thinking.

Rosa's perspective and aspiration to succeed in her endeavors was evident in all the immigrant mothers in my study. They agreed that the obstacles in their lives seem smaller in comparison to what they had to endure when crossing the border. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1996b) say that when immigrants compare their old way of life with their new life in the US, they are better able to cope with their hardships. I argue that the unique experience of crossing has given immigrant mothers a renewed confidence in themselves and in their ability to reach their goals. This positive attitude on life is what I identified earlier as part of immigrant mothers' agency.

The challenge of the migration and settlement experience, including enduring conditions during their journey to the US, was often instrumental in the reconstruction of the self. Risk taking was evident across many of the stories. Furthermore, there are numerous examples of social constraints (i.e., language barriers, legal documents, proper education, and gender) that these women deemed irrelevant. Thus, they continued with

their plans. It is through these adverse situations that immigrant mothers have come to the realization that their strength and capabilities are much larger than they thought. Immigrant mothers are able to re-author themselves under a new light of capability, innovation and strength.

It is this new view of self capability that propelled my participants to accomplish some of their personal goals once established in the US. For example, Maria became PTA president and was able to figure out how to obtain legal assistance to stop the deportation of her husband; Rosa believed that she could help children develop reading fluency skills and signed herself up to tutor students in her child's school; and Elizabeth separated from her partner in Central Texas due to domestic abuse. This strand of ICW, Unrealized strength, is relevant to the study of immigrants because it allows us to better understand this positive attitude characteristic of immigrants reported by others (Pearce et al., 2011; Suárez–Orozco & Suárez–Orozco, 1995, 1995b). Portes & Rumbaut (2001) observed a generalized optimism among immigrant parents that persisted despite problems, setbacks, and much suffering, most of these immigrants view their American lives in a positive light, translating it into high expectations and a sustained effort to achieve them. Finally, I want to clarify that with this analysis, I do not intend to imply that only through adverse situations or crossing the border illegally immigrants develop their strengths. My purpose is to highlight the connection made by my immigrant mothers in relation to their crossing experiences and the way they conduct themselves after those experiences.

Feeling Trapped in the US oasis or Re-authoring the Selves

The US has become the immigrants' oasis in the middle of their dry, deserted situations in impoverished or troubled communities in Latin America and other parts of the world. People wanting to relocate to the US, with or without authorization, believe they can find better jobs and a better quality of life in the new land. Although this may be true when compared with their living conditions in their home countries, a large number of immigrants (particularly undocumented) end up in poor communities once in the US. Many factors contribute to immigrants' relocation including education, established relatives in the US, and the ethos of reception of the host community. Contributing to the belief of better opportunities in the US are the ideas and recounting of relatives already established in the United States who go back to visit their home countries. In the words of Elizabeth, "Sometimes people that are already here [in the US] get you excited." Rosa sums it up in the following way:

> *Cuando uno se viene para acá, uno piensa que va a ganar mucho dinero, y va a mandar mucho dinero, y no es verdad. No es verdad lo que a uno le dicen. Y cuando uno llega aquí se da cuenta que no es como a uno le contaron y pasa por muchos sacrificios. Tiene que trabajar duro uno para poder mandar dinero para allá.* ***Y a veces yo digo no vale la pena haberme venido.*** *Mis hermanos varones sí tienen interés de venir por lo mismo porque no encuentran trabajo, por muchas necesidades. Yo sí les digo la verdad de todo lo que se sufre para venir aquí. Les cuento de todo lo que se tiene que pasar, las consecuencias de estar aquí. No ver uno más a la familia.*
>
> When you come [to the US], you have the idea that you're going to make a lot of money, and be able to send back a lot of money, and that is not true. It's not true what people tell you. And when you arrive here, you realize that it is not the way they told you and you suffer a lot. You have to work really hard to send money [to your home country]. **Sometimes I say that it is not worth it to come [to the US].** My brothers are interested in coming for the same reasons; they can't find job, too many needs. I tell them the truth about how much suffering there's here. I tell them about everything that they have to go through and the consequences of being here, not to see your family anymore.

Rosa tries to be as honest as she can and tell her younger brothers how life has been for her. She says that she does it to protect them and to save them from suffering. Erika is familiar with this scenario. She heard similar advice from her aunt, "Don't go; it's very dangerous." Erika grew up seeing her aunt and uncle making trips back and forth between California and Michoacán. She remembers her aunt saying it was not a good idea for girls to cross the border illegally as there were lots of dangers. Yet, once married, Erika decided to travel to the US with her husband and baby son.

It is this contradicting state of wanting to make a better living in the US and not being able to leave the country that gives name to this section, "Feeling trapped in the oasis." All my participants expressed a desire go back to their countries to reside. This finding contradicts the general public belief that immigrants come here to stay. Immigrants come to the US to achieve financial independence to support their families. It is with time and different circumstances that their temporary arrangements become permanent. In their study on the effects of the 1996 immigration reform law on immigrant families, Hagan & Rodriguez (2002) report about the settled lives that deported immigrants had before deportation. In their words, "a substantial number of deportee respondents, although undocumented, had made lives for themselves in the United States, that were not unlike those long-term residents with legal status or citizenship" (p. 197). Regardless of legal status, immigrants live established lives in the US. They rent apartments, purchase vehicles and participate in community activities such as attending religious services and school functions. The excerpts below give us a glimpse into my participants' souls. They want so vehemently to go back to their home countries, but different circumstances keep them in the US.

> **Elizabeth**: The dream a lot of people have it's to be here, but mine now it's to go back. But now I think about these two children that were born here [in the US]. I say, if I go back they don't… they won't have the same life there [in Honduras].
>
> **Erika**: We already had a child and we wanted to give him a better life because there [in Mexico] we couldn't make ends meet. And that's the whole reason we continue here because if we could, we would have already gone back.
>
> **Rosa**: It's hard being here because I can't see my parents. I never went back to Honduras. Sometimes I wish I could hug them, but I can only speak with them by phone. I love my parents and my siblings very much, but if I go then I won't be able to come back. I better stay for my children.

This finding also suggests that although immigrants establish their residence in the US, they do not feel they belong here and long to go back to their home country. In his study of undocumented workers in southern California, Chávez (1998) found out that the immigrants' objective was to survive, not to become rich or even happy; and that most preferred remaining in their home countries. More research is needed to find out if this same feeling is prevalent among lawful immigrants who can visit their home countries and reenter the US. Another set of factors that needs to be looked into are education, employment and financial means of immigrants.

Unlike the first two strands of ICW, "Solidarity in crossing" and "Unrealized strength," that provide clear examples of immigrants re-authoring, "Feeling trapped in the US oasis" can provide for us another aspect of immigrant life where the actors show their agency and resiliency amid very difficult circumstances. Immigrant mothers cope with this ambivalence by centering their focus on the well being and future of their children in the US. So, how are undocumented immigrant mothers re-authoring themselves and resisting inequity and subordination? I believe the mothers embody resistance themselves by exercising their agency and thus resisting complete absorption into the mainstream

culture. They challenged the status quo of being women and having to depend on a male partner. My five mother participants ventured themselves into the unknown with a goal in mind. As such, they resisted passivity and acted in a way they considered best for their own success and that of their families. What follows are examples of how undocumented immigrant mothers in my study recreate themselves and their lives in their new environment. Through continuing their learning, passing on and practicing ethnic, cultural and family traditions, heritage language maintenance, and contact with their home country, these undocumented mothers challenge subordination and enable social mobility.

Desire to learn – Immigrant mothers in this study shared examples of their efforts to improve their skills and knowledge. This too is an example of resisting subordination for lacking skills. Aware of the importance of effective functioning in an all-English society, immigrant mothers seek opportunities for themselves to learn the language of the host community, like Rosa and Maria who take ESL classes. By aspiring to learn alongside their children, Erika and Rosa are trying to better themselves as well. This new learning gives them the opportunity to help their children with school work, and also to learn for their own advancement. Erika reads bedtime stories to her children using bilingual books. She says, "And I ask (my children) to tell me if I mispronounce a word so I can learn how to pronounce it." Rosa volunteered herself to be part of the program *Compañeros en Lectura* (Partners in Reading) in which she helps student in the primary grades to develop fluency in reading. Rosa explained that her interest in participating at school events such as Partners in Reading was motivated by her desire to help her own children. She added,

"Now that I'm here [in the US], I have learned. I want to do something better with my children. That's why I like to attend programs where they teach you how to help our children, how to support them, how to encourage them." Immigrant mothers are not passive spectators at the expense of their environment and take opportunities to succeed and to help their children succeed.

Cultural traditions – All the mothers in my study expressed pride and respect for their home country traditions and did their best to pass them on to their children. There also seems to be a strong correlation between having a strong ethnic identity and having a system to share ethnic traditions with their children. Immigrants, aided by new technologies, have developed ingenious ways to maintain real time and connections with their countries of origin. Erika gives us perhaps one of the best examples of keeping traditions alive and current for her children. Erika's extended family in Guanajuato, Mexico, sends them video recordings of an important annual festivity celebrated in honor of the town's patron saint. Through these yearly films, Erika has kept her country of origin alive for her children. In her own words,

> *¡Hay yo les cuento muchas cosas a mis niños de México! Por ejemplo yo les cuento que allá las ferias se hacen muy bonitas. Les digo que se ponen muchos puestos y juegos. Les hablo de las danzas que se hacen allá y que yo andaba en una danza de esas de los machetes. A los niños les gusta porque en la casa de mi esposo filman las películas de las fiestas y las mandan para acá. Y los niños se emocionan y dicen, "¡Queremos ir a subirnos a ese juego! Y queremos esto y queremos lo'tro". Siempre lo hemos visto cada año y por eso ellos se emocionan.*
> I tell my children so many things about Mexico! For example, I tell them that the *ferias* are so beautiful there. I tell them about the many stands and rides. I tell them about the dances and that I was in the *machete* dance. My children like it because my husband's family is used to film the *fiestas* and they send them here. And the children get excited and say,

> "We want to go on that ride! And we want this, and we want that!" We always see it every year and that's why [my children] get excited.

Maintaining ethnic cultural traditions is perhaps the most effective form of resisting assimilation to mainstream America. Assimilating is one way of becoming a subordinate of the dominant culture. Immigrant mothers have adopted some of the traditions and beliefs of the host country, but are diligent to continue celebrating their own ethnic customs.

Language – Linguistic capital is seen as the ability to communicate through different languages or styles of communication. The importance of keeping the Spanish language alive in their children's lives was of critical importance for all five mothers in my study. None of them ever expressed a predilection for English over Spanish. Learning English is not only a way of advancement, but also a way to help their children with school work. Immigrant mothers do not impede the progress of their children using an English curriculum, but they also deem Spanish as important. They foster in their children a love for their native language, Spanish, so they can communicate with relatives in their home countries. Erika tells us that, "It is important to me that they learn Spanish well because when they go to Mexico, they are going to want to talk with their cousins. Sometimes they say the wrong word, one word instead of another one. We try to correct them and teach them."

Some of the mothers considered speaking Spanish as a non-negotiable rule at home. It could be argued that it is this parental stance that has the greatest impact in children's Spanish development and not the bilingual programs offered in US schools. After all, a large number of bilingual programs in US school have the objective of

teaching English to students who speak another language. In other instances, knowledge of Spanish is seen as a way for immigrant parents to guide and be aware of their children's ideas or plans. Erika's remarks illustrate very well my participants' view of Spanish:

> *Como nosotros hablamos puro español, les decimos a los niños que tienen que hablar español para nosotros poder entenderlos y saber de qué están platicando sino uno no va a saber. Me da más seguridad para nosotros saber qué es lo que ellos están haciendo y piensan hacer porque si lo hablan en inglés nosotros no vamos a saber qué estaban haciendo ni que es lo que ellos tienen pensado hacer más adelante. Y si lo hablan en español nosotros vamos a saber y les podemos aconsejar o guiar.*
>
> We speak only Spanish, so we tell the children that they have to speak Spanish too so we can understand them and know what they are talking about, if not we would not know [what they say]. I feel more secure if we know what they are doing and what they plan to do because if they say it in English, we are not going to know what they are doing or what they plan to do in the future. And if they speak in Spanish, we are going to know and then we can advise or guide them.

Contact with home country – Undocumented immigrants unable to travel to their home countries have devised different ways to maintain close ties with their relatives. Whether through pictures, phone calls or video chatting through Internet, this close communication allows both sets of families to keep up with most family happenings. Families on both sides of the border are aware of each others' lives and events. Some, like Elizabeth, have a contact person who travels frequently to Honduras and takes presents and money to her children who in return send her pictures. All mothers reported keeping in close contact with their mothers in their home countries, some even calling them almost every day.

Like Erika who felt the need to call her mother frequently, the rest of my mother participants also expressed a sense of guilt if they did not communicate with their

families regularly. I can attest to that myself. After moving to the US, I also felt the need to call my parents every weekend. It became a ritual. If I knew I was not going to be able to call them on any given Sunday, I made them aware in advance. This practice of immigrants is almost like a life line for both parties –the ones who left and the ones who stayed behind. I, too, felt guilty when my parents and I had not talked for a week because I knew they were waiting for my call. Elizabeth's words illustrate for us the painful wait of those who stay and long for a phone call from the ones who traveled *al norte*. With watery eyes and a shaky voice Elizabeth described waiting in her community in Honduras for her husband who had gone *al norte,* to call:

> *No era dinero lo que queríamos. Nosotros estábamos ahí donde nos dejó. Tres años lo esperé. Nosotros estábamos* ***ahí****. Él simplemente no llamaba porque sí es una persona muy inteligente. Si tan siquiera él hubiera sido capaz de agarrar un teléfono y hablarnos… Uno cuando está allá, no siempre espera dinero.* ***Uno espera que la persona que se viene se acuerde de uno.*** *Y le digo yo, tú nunca te acordaste de nosotros.*
>
> It wasn't money what we needed. We were there where he left us. I waited for him for three years. We were **there**. He just didn't call; because he is very capable. If he would have at least grabbed a phone to call us… When you are there, you don't always expect money. **One expects that the person who leaves, remembers you.** And I tell him, you forgot about us.

Elizabeth's account provides a glimpse at human suffering that immigrants endure when they decide to leave their home countries. She understands the pain, the fear, and the uncertainty that family in the home country can experience. Now, in her situation as immigrant in the US, Elizabeth makes sure she stays in contact with her children and mother in Honduras.

For a long time, the telephone and post mail were the only ways to communicate from one country to another. Aided with new technologies and services that target the immigrant market in the US, immigrant families are able to talk and even see their

relatives left behind. Skype, video chat, and other real time ways to communicate via Internet have been the vehicle for grandparents in the home country to meet their grandchildren who live in the US. Rosa shared with me the first time that she and her mother used a computer to talk:

> *A mi mamá siempre le llamo cada fin de semana, si no, no me siento bien. Ahora gracias a Dios, mi esposo me pudo comprar una laptop y luego mi esposo ahorró pa' comprar otra y mandársela a mi mamá. Ella no sabe lo de la computadora pero mi hermano le ayuda. Ahora ya no nomás hablamos por teléfono sino que hablamos por video chat. La primera mi mamá vez estaba llore y llore. Decía, "No lo puedo creer después de tanto tiempo ya te puedo ver."*
> I call my mom every weekend. If I don't do it, I don't feel well. Thanks to God my husband was able to purchase a laptop for me, and then he saved to buy another one to send to my mother. She doesn't know [how to work] the computer, but my brother helps her. We not only communicate by phone, but also through video chat. The first time [we used it], my mother couldn't stop crying. She said, "I can't believe it that after so much time I can see you."

These new ways of communicating with relatives left behind are examples of linguistic capital among immigrants because it allows for the renewal of Spanish in US communities. It also gives emotional strength to immigrants and gives the mothers an opportunity to author themselves in relation to their families. Beyond the linguistic capital, these examples allow us to see that these mothers are technologically savvy, intelligent, and innovative. Rosa's example of sending her mother a laptop computer also illustrates for us how immigrants in the US impact their communities in their home countries through social remittances (Levitt, 2001).

Living at a distance – One of the most interesting and unexpected topics was how undocumented immigrant parents "visit" their home country through their children. In my side notes when I was coding the data, I labeled it "Little citizens traveling alone."

Because undocumented immigrants are unable to travel to their home countries, they send their children to be met by extended family. Little citizens are being sent to their parents' home countries as precious packages. Erica's account, below, evidences the extreme measures that some undocumented immigrants take to satisfy that emotional void of not being able to see their families left behind.

> *Podría mandar a los niños con un señor que lleva cosas, paquetería y a ese señor ya lo conocen en la casa de mi esposo. Si me da confianza pero le pienso. Mire, mi comadre ya mandó los niños con él. Se los llevó y se los trajo. Los dejo ir por dos semanas. Fueron nomás solitos con el señor. El más grande está en Kinder y el otro tiene tres años. ¡Así de chiquitos los mandó! Y a la niña no la mandó porque todavía usa pañal, si no, yo creo que también la hubiera mandado.*
> I could send my kids with a man that takes things (to Mexico), shipments, and he is known amongst my husband's family. I trust him, but I have my doubts. Look, my *comadre* sent her kids with him. He took them to Mexico and he brought them back. She let them go for two weeks. They went alone with this man. The oldest one is in kinder and the other one is three years old. They are so little and she sent them! And she didn't send her daughter because she's still in diapers, but I think she would have sent her as well.

This practice of sending kids to Mexico, to visit extended family, with others able to reenter the US, is well known. Growing up in Mexico, it was common to hear that somebody had come to visit with an aunt, uncle or grandparent. What was new to me is the fact that undocumented families are taking the risk of sending their children with people other than close relatives. Erika's explanation that "I could send my kids with a man that takes things (to Mexico), shipments…" carries a symbolism that children "can be sent" like one would send a package. The difference, though, is that this is a very fragile package.

Conclusions

By many societal standards, these women would not be considered successful. All have struggled with school, and some have experienced abuse, poverty, or teen parenthood. Each has faced family, community and institutional challenges. Yet the many forms of cultural capital were abundantly evident within their narratives. The immigrant mothers' characteristics explained in this chapter portray them as agentic beings. The challenges and struggles they faced in their home countries were strong motivators for them to take the initiative to travel to *el norte*. However, it was their self-reliant nature, goals, and pioneer spirit that in the end motivated them to relocate. Once in the US, their resiliency, hard work, and desire to succeed have been the pillars of their quest for the well-being of their children and families. The collective elements of their agency have been critical for these women in developing not only a healthy self-esteem, but also strategies to survive in a new environment.

The forms of immigrant cultural wealth presented in this chapter are fluid in nature – one's experience can reflect multiple elements. However, to date, there has been only limited attention to how immigrant families of Latino background are generating and using community cultural wealth to further advance themselves in the US. Immigrant cultural wealth offers an important conceptual framework for scholarship that challenges incomplete and deficit-based portraits of Latina/o immigrant communities. ICW provides a powerful foundation for further research. It is my hope that this study of brave immigrant mothers and children adds to the current body of research and deepens the understanding of the richness of their cultural wealth.

In the next chapter, I present the overall findings and implications of this study as well as recommendations for future work with immigrant communities.

VII. CONCLUSION

Introduction

My decision to work with immigrant populations emerged from a personal need to study and analyze the resiliency and (re)creation of the selves in new spaces. During my masters program, my interest was sparked by thought-provoking readings related to the education of English language learners. The underlying assumption was that these students were undocumented and thus illegal in the country. While this might have been true some years ago, the vast majority of Latino students currently attending our elementary schools are US citizens. These are the children of immigrants who came to this country 10, 15 or 20 years ago. Twenty years ago, when I started my career as a bilingual teacher in the US, a small number of my students were from Mexico and other Central American countries. Now, as an elementary school principal, the number of children that we enroll at my school from Latin American countries is minimal.

As an immigrant myself, I wanted to give voice to marginalized groups that are seldom researched. Children of immigrants are often times grouped together with other groups of the population, and the same is common for undocumented immigrant mothers. Even more relevant for me was to bring to center the voices of young children. Most research (Sánchez, 2007; Sánchez and Kasun, 2012; Machado-Casas, 2009; Gonzales, 2009; Perez, 2009; Rincón, 2008; Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008, 2002; Bejarano, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; Olsen, 1997; Igoa, 1995) has been conducted with adolescents and young adults, but not with young children. We stand to learn from Latino young children and from undocumented immigrant mothers.

Legal status played an enormous role in this study, as I anticipated. As such, I sought to study how mothers and children in mixed-legal status families negotiate the tensions that migrating can engender. This thesis asks the following broad question: ***How do undocumented mothers and children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America construct self-understandings in relation to their ethnic identity and immigration experiences in mixed-legal status families?*** A reason to work towards understanding identity formation among children of Latino ancestry is to open an educational space where their unique experiences are valued just as much as those of mainstream students. This subgroup of the population is different than recent immigrants because they have been born and raised in the US. Their families still hold strong ties with their countries of origin even without frequent physical movement across borders. Parents keep in constant communication with their relatives and (re)create a "home away from home" scenario where ethnic traditions are reenacted. Thus, even without physical access to their parents' homes and towns, children of immigrants become transnationals who act across borders and maintain ties to culture and language (Levitt, 2001; Machado-Casas, 2009; Aranda, 2006).

Research (Hong & Ho, 2005) in the area of student achievement shows that parents have major effects in terms of the encouragement and expectations that they transmit to their children. Parental expectations are far more powerful than other factors of the home such as family composition (Hattie, 2009). We also know that parent and ethnic peers are strong contributors to the self-identification of adolescents in immigrant families (Phinney, et al., 2001). If parents see their own culture as valuable and important, they will transmit this to their children. Immigrant families establish their lives

in relation to the needs of their children. For the most part, the father works out of the house to support the family, while the mother stays at home to care for the children and work for the family. This dynamic elucidates for us the great importance mothers play in the lives of their children. It is this mother-child process that directly correlates with the identity development of the children of immigrants. Immigrant mothers play a very strong role in shaping their children's early years, their exposure to an ethnic culture of the home country, and to the development of an ethnic identity. Legal status and immigration experiences were very important factors that helped shape the identity development of the children in this study. As such, I conclude that immigration experiences and residency status influence the ethnic identity development for children in mixed-legal status families from Mexico and Central America.

Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefanic, 2001; Villenas and Deyhle, 1999; Matsuda, 1991) and Latina/Latino critical theory (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2005) were central for the development and analysis of this study. Both theories address issues embedded in the lives of immigrants such as language, immigration status, race, identity, and culture. Guided by the tenets of these theories I aimed to validate and legitimized the experiential knowledge of marginalized groups such as immigrant children and undocumented immigrant mothers. Their stories also intend to disrupt the one-story rhetoric about Latino immigrants in the US. The rich and varied narratives of undocumented mothers draw for us alternative views of the immigration experiences that challenge the dominant ideology. Finally, using CRT and LatCrit lenses to analyze the educational history of Mexican Americans in the US we are able to see that the current

educational experiences of children of immigrants are the result of sociohistorical and political events in this country and not the result of the individual alone.

Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth inspired me to design and develop this study. However, its tenets proved to be too limiting for my analysis of the findings of my work with undocumented immigrant mothers and children of immigrants. My participants' unique transnational characteristics and ways of knowing needed to be analyzed from a different perspective that highlighted these as part of the richness of the individual and not as an aberration or deviation from the norm. My work aims to build on Yosso's framework of community cultural wealth from an immigrant cultural lens. Immigrant Cultural Wealth or *Riqueza Cultural del Inmigrante* (ICW) emerged as a pivotal lens to analyze and explain the findings of this work with undocumented immigrant mothers and children of immigrants. My cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) as a Mexican/Chicana immigrant, my *mestiza* consciousness and *facultad* (Anzaldúa, 1999; Elenes, et al., 2001), as well as my stance as a feminist woman of color gave me the focus to visualize ICW. My cultural intuition as a Mexican immigrant and Chicana feminist epistemology (Delgado Bernal, 1998) allowed me to engage in the analysis of the data from personal experience thus creating Immigrant Cultural Wealth. The capitals related to ICW are: 1) solidarity in crossing, 2) unrealized strength, and 3) feeling trapped in the US oasis or re-authoring the selves. This last capital encompasses different areas such as language, desire to learn, and living at a distance because immigrants resist subordination and challenge inequity using a variety of strategies.

Overall findings and implications

Children of immigrants

Previous studies have shown that "children fundamentally shape the nature and course of families' migration experiences" (Orellana et al., 2001, p. 587). My study confirmed that children continue to be the center of the modern immigrant family in the US. That is, immigrant parents make plans and decisions based on the well-being of their children. Undocumented immigrant parents are willing to ignore their own personal and emotional needs if their decisions to remain in the US benefit their children. When coding my data from the mothers, but also in my conversations with children, "children first" (as I coded it) was a prevalent theme. Angela, 10 years old, shared that her mother decided to come to the US in search of better opportunities for her and her family. Although some of the mothers did not have children when they migrated to the US, they now do and they construct their lives around their children's needs and futures. Below are excerpts from my conversations with mothers about their motivations to migrate to the US:

> **Elizabeth**: Sometimes the problems we may have there, the need to get something better for oneself, for the children, more than anything for the children… for my mother.
>
> **Erika**: We came to the US because, in all honesty, we didn't have enough there [to live]. We already had a child and we wanted to give him a better life because there [in Mexico] we couldn't make ends meet. We are here because of our children.
>
> **Mariana**: In fact, what really motivated me was not to live the way I was with my sisters, and come to stay with my mom. I used to bounce off from one sister's house to another.
>
> **Rosa**: Now I have my children and I live for them. My interest of staying [in the US] it's because of them. I want a better future for them. I want for them to have

> something better than I did and I don't want for them to experience what I went through.

The examples above speak of aspiration and sacrifice. Mariana, as the daughter of an undocumented immigrant, provides for us a multilayered view of what it is like to be left behind in the home country and the longing for family reunification. These findings correlate with other studies and debunk the deficit view of immigrant parents as passive, inactive, not caring or uninvolved in their children's education in US schools (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Urrieta and Martinez, 2011).

I argue that children of immigrants from Mexican and Central American ancestry draw from their history-in-person (Holland et al., 1998), their *facultad* (Anzaldúa, 1999) and their cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998), concepts drawn from Chicana Feminist epistemology to make sense of their world. Their lives are not wholly similar to those of US-born Latinos because their needs, fears, challenges and preoccupations are very different (See Sanchez, 2001; Bejarano, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Children of immigrant, as first generation, must negotiate a great deal of unfamiliar territory (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006), including discrimination and stereotyping at school and in the larger society (Monzó & Rueda, 2009; Bejarano, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999; Olsen, 1997). These negative experiences have consequences in their adaptation and adjustment, and most importantly on their self perceptions in relation to the dominant society.

Children of immigrants and Immigrant Cultural Wealth

Children of immigrants, as participants in the figured world of immigrants, are able to acquire cultural wealth particular to immigrants. Their participation in the figured world of their parents also enriches their lives by integrating some of the wealth of

immigrants. Although children did not necessarily manifest the same immigrant wealth and knowledge as immigrant mothers, they have learned from the experiences of their families. Children's immigrant cultural wealth ranged from knowing about every day facts (i.e., color of police and immigration vehicles, immigration requirements and law facts to citizenship) to more sophisticated personal characteristics such as moral values, inner strength, self-confidence, resiliency, and empathy.

In my conversations with children it was clear that they have *compromiso* with their families. In the Latino culture, *compromiso* it is so much more than a "commitment." It carries a stronger meaning and encompasses loyalty, responsibility and faithfulness. Children of immigrants understand the complex relational and practical concept that implies being a family, which in turn conveys certain responsibilities (Urrieta, 2013). They did not disclose to me all of their private information that may have risked the well-being of their families. They have learned about resiliency and perseverance from their parents. They are aware that their parents have made sacrifices for them to have a better life in the US, and in response children's *compromiso* is to do well in school. Children showed their self-confidence in an adult mainstream world by navigating it with and for their parents. Translating for their parents, helping to get appointments or facilitating job-related issues allows students to acquire conceptual understandings of belonging, responsibility, and integration into their families. In his study of how children and youth learned indigenous heritage *sabers* or knowings, Urrieta (2013) found out that such learning skills were important, but mainly they taught children behaviors related to family and community cohesiveness and well-being. Similarly,

children of immigrants are learning by doing and acquiring skills that pertain to the well-being of their families.

Through our literary circles, I was able to see how the students manifested their empathy towards others. The characters in the stories read went through difficult situations such as being deported, separated from their families, or living in dire conditions. The child participants were not judgmental and expressed feelings of caring, compassion, and understanding. The children also exhibited a sense of maturity not necessarily typical for children their age. I attribute this self-confidence to their constant participation in the figured world of their parents and extended family. From a young age, children whose parents are unable to travel in and out of the US, learn to travel to Mexico and Central America with other adults. This practice of sending children with extended family and other acquaintances to Mexico should not be demonized. Instead, it should be seen as an experience for children to gain self-confidence and also an opportunity to try out new, undiscovered personal skills. Away from home and their parents, children learn to trust other adults and make sense of the world by themselves. We can equate this practice to mainstream, middle class practices in which parents socialize their children through paid summer camps. Middle class families spend thousands of dollars sending out their children to learn the world away from home for a couple of weeks in the summer. Similarly, children of immigrants learn the world when sent to Mexico and Central America with adults other than their parents with the advantage that they are also able to strengthen family, cultural, and traditional ties with their families in their parents' hermitage countries.

Immigrant mothers

My quest to research the identity development of children of immigrants from Mexico and Central America uncovered amazing stories of strength, determination and success among undocumented mothers. Immigrant mothers were open and generous in their conversations with me. We had connections as mothers, immigrants, Latinas, Spanish-speakers, adults, and thus, I was able to collect more data from mothers than from children. For my analysis and explanation of findings from my mothers' data I developed a unique framework called Immigrant Cultural Wealth (ICW). My cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) as an immigrant aided me in the development of this framework. Also at play was my *mestiza consciousness* (Anzaldúa, 1999). Yosso's notion of Community Cultural Wealth (2005) was my initial lens to analyze how immigrant mothers resist and respond to their new environment in the US and at the same time recreate themselves. However, community cultural wealth did not provide for my study the fluidity necessary to explain the unique strengths of undocumented immigrant populations. It is clear that due to the limitation of their legal status, undocumented immigrant mothers do not have the same opportunities that documented migrants enjoy. However, immigrant women have created ways to live life as fully as possible in the US. My immigrant cultural wealth framework offers new possibilities for rethinking the traditional notion of immigrant women as passive, *mujeres de su casa* (women of their homes) and puts them in charge of their own destiny.

A discourse of struggle was prevalent in the interviews with immigrant mothers and in their descriptions of their lives in their home countries and in the US. However, none of them perceived themselves as helpless victims. They showed an inquisitive mind

dissatisfied with their conditions in their home countries. Immigrant mothers in my study were bold in their decisions to migrate to the US and change their world. They talked about struggles (financial, educational, familial), but this was not the prevalent topic of conversation. These women had strengths and weaknesses. They were actively making and remaking themselves in a new space despite the limitations of their legal status. Most importantly, they all have hope and reasons to live life to the fullest even "in the shadows" as expressed by Erika, one of my mother participants.

Immigrant mothers anchor their motivation to succeed on the progress and well-being of their children. Mothers expressed having hope and striving to learn as a path to better themselves in order to help their children. We need to capitalize on the strengths and motivation of immigrant mothers, who proudly identified themselves as immigrant women. The dimensions of agency are varied and evident in the characteristics of immigrant mothers in my study including creativity, relocation, reinvention of the self, leadership and responsibility, among others. As demonstrated by my immigrant cultural wealth framework, undocumented immigrant mothers are able to re-author themselves in their hybrid figured world (Urrieta, 2011) of "illegality" and normalized daily living in the US. They author themselves as strong, determined women attending to their families' needs versus more submissive roles. We need to create spaces in the community, in our schools and other spaces where marginalized individuals can express their points of view as re/positioned agentic beings. Immigration has had typically a male face. However, we need to give adequate attention to the contributions of immigrant women. Taking a gender lens in research on immigration not only will allow us to understand immigrant women, but also may provide a deeper understanding of contemporary immigration.

Ethnic identity development and figured worlds

A way that immigrant mothers resist their environment (Yosso, 2005) is by having a strong understanding of who they are. Their own identities are very well defined and that allows them to support their children in defining their own ethnic identities. This is what Holland et al. (1998) refers to as "thickening" of identity. That is through day-to-day encounters ever a period of time individuals develop a long-term identity. Immigrant mothers also seek opportunities to enact and practice their ethnic identity to validate it for themselves and their children (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). The composite of what makes immigrant mothers who they are correlates directly with their identity. Martinez and Dukes' (1997) research indicates that the increase in self-esteem or feelings of well-being that come with a strong ethnic identity may serve as an empowering tool for women in some groups. They show pride in their national origins, which they instill in their children. However, it is important to note that immigrant mothers do not overlook the fact that their children are US citizens and therefore they are also recognized as "Americanos." As expressed by Maria, "To me, they are Mexican, just like me, but American as well because they were born here. Although, I believe that they are not as Mexican as their father and I. The truth is that they don't know [Mexico]." Maria's last statement allows us to see the strong influence families, particularly mothers, have in shaping their children's ethnic identity.

In the case of Rosa from Honduras who married a Mexican man, she explained that to her, her children are a mix of the three: Mexican, Honduran and American. She also pointed out that in the US it is more common to see things related to Mexico than

from other Latin American countries, so her son identifies himself more as Mexican. Rosa does not want her children to forget her husband's or her own origin. In her own words:

> *Mi niño sabe que su papá es mexicano y que yo soy de Honduras. Le digo, "papi, tú tienes tres nacionalidades mexicano, hondureño y de aquí, americano. No me gusta estarles diciendo, "Tú eres de aquí, tú eres de aquí." Yo no quiero que ellos olviden de dónde soy yo y de dónde es su papá. Quiero que sepan las costumbres de mi país y del país de su papá también. Quiero que le tengan amor también. Le digo a mi niño, "Tú no naciste en Honduras ni en México pero también eres de allá."*
>
> My son knows that his father is Mexican and that I am Honduran. I tell him, "Papi, you have three nationalities, Mexican, Honduran and, from here, American." I don't like to tell them, "You are from here, you are from here." I don't want for them to forget where I and their father are from. I want them to learn the traditions from my county and from their dad's country as well. I also want them to love them. I tell my son, "You were not born in Honduras or in Mexico, but you are also from there." I don't want for them to forget that they also belong there.

Identity development is significantly affected by our environment, personal experiences, and self understandings (della Porta & Viani, 2006; Holland et al., 1998; Urrieta, 2007). The identities of the children of immigrants of the Mexican and Central American immigrants I studied are being shaped by the experiences they encounter in their immediate environment. Their surroundings are permeated by English and Spanish languages; by images, symbols, and traditions of their heritage country; by their encounters with US institutions such as schools; and by their parents' beliefs and own experiences. The children in my study are bilingual in English and Spanish and follow bicultural traditions from their heritage country and their native country, the US. With this, we see a healthy approach to embracing their multiplicity of belonging to different cultures. Parents are exposing their US born-children to images, symbols, and traditions

of their heritage country, and are also teaching them to see these as part of their selves. Immigrant parents see this practice as their *deber,* or duty, since US schools do not value or foster these ways of knowing and ways of being in their children (Urrieta & Martinez, 2011). As a result, older children in my study felt comfortable talking about their ethnic experiences and heritage language. However, children of immigrants are also developing their identity under the sociocultural auspices of a figured world of (un)documented migration. Drawn into a figured world of immigrants (Urrieta et al., (2011), Latino children of immigrants in mixed status families are experiencing aspects of immigration as their own lived experiences. As stated earlier, the ICW experiences that originate in the figured world of immigrants enrich the lives of children of immigrants.

Parents play a crucial role in this dynamic as confirmed by my older group of children. The three children (Juan, Angela and Mónica) expressed feeling affiliated to their parents' home country. I see children's identification to their parent's home countries as a result of their mothers' efforts to share and talk about their experiences and origin. Their mothers had formed for them a link between the children's selves and their mothers'/parents' home country. This same practice was shared by my mother participants. They made conscious efforts to have their children participate in their figured world of their home country. By means of sharing videos of festivities, accounts of past experiences, artifacts and sending their children to visit relatives in their home countries parents are forming associations for their children. This same conscious effort, or intentionality, was observed by Machado-Casas (2009) in her study with parents of indigenous young adults in the US who transmit survival strategies to their children. Undocumented, indigenous Latino parents take their past history and knowledge as

indigenous people and pass down this cumulative knowledge to their undocumented children to navigate life in the US. Children of immigrants, however, acquire from their parents cultural traits, practices, languages and transnational strategies not as survival tools, but as essential parts of their ethnic identity. Immigrant parents view this intentional exposure as important, supplemental knowledge that US schools do not offer (Urrieta & Martinez, 2011) to their children.

As suggested by Anzaldúa (1999), identity and language are deeply connected. Language is the central means by which we understand culture (Anzaldúa 1999; González, 2001, Zentella, 1997). Although children acknowledge that their Spanish language was getting weaker, they differentiated spaces by language use: Spanish at home and English at school. Language becomes the "coyote tool" that facilitates their entrance and participation in cross-cultural and linguistic borders (Machado-Casas, 2009, p. 91). Thus, children of immigrants negotiate two main figured worlds in relation to their core identities: the home-Spanish-ethnic figured world and the school-English-*American* figured world. This diverity of the selves is marked by space, but it is also fluid. Children of immigrants are able to author themselves in either of their figured worlds. These figured worlds are mediated by legal status, their parents' association to their home countries, stories and experiences about (im)migrating, and life in the US. All of these elements are meaningful in relation to the figured worlds of Latino children of immigrants. Although language and identity are deeply connected, it is crucial that we look beyond the area of English language leaning when designing educational programs for children of immigrants. Based on the findings of this study, we can clearly see that the lives of these students are composed of different elements such as legal status,

English/Spanish languages, immigration experiences/traumas, cultural traditions, and family composition. We need to work at the intersections of these different dimensions of identity and experience as well as to consider how each aspect is relevant for the education of children of immigrants of Latino descent.

Legal status matters

Legal status emerged as a constant theme with my participants as both a marker of status as well as a cause of suffering and joy. Thus, the meaning of legal status changed according to each participant and his/her experience. Mother participants without proper documentation to travel to their countries of origin view legal status as something reachable in their future. They were hopeful. Erika expressed her hope by saying that President Obama had promised the legalization of undocumented immigrants. Others would patiently wait for years until their US-born children were old enough to claim them. Legal status was a source of preoccupation for all my mother participants; some even having plans of what to do if deported. Yet, their families continue living their lives in their usual established ways: renting a house or apartment, paying their bills, working, sending kids to school and making plans for their future in the US.

In terms of place of birth, child participants differentiated between being "from here" (the US) and being from Mexico, in the case of their parents, siblings, and extended family. Similar to what Mangual Figeroa (2013) found in her study of the relevance of migratory status in mixed-legal status families, conversations about country of origin among my participants were strongly associated with legal status. Children spoke of "having papers if you are from here" and needing a passport or VISA if you are not from

the US. Children of immigrants have a vast knowledge, for their age, of many aspects of the law as it relates to immigration. They have grown up listening to their family's stories of going to their home countries with or without legal documentation. Legal status was very relevant for the children in my study. Having *papeles* or papers had a lot of implications for them; from being able to visit relatives in Mexico to being detained, and consequently deported. Children of immigrants experience and endure many of the same perils their undocumented parents and/or close relatives are experiencing. Children of immigrants are "living" some of these experiences as their own and that has an impact in their identity development, their resiliency and the way they perceive their world.

Legal status emerged as a cultural artifact with symbolic value connected to the social and cultural context to the figured world of children of immigrants. Through the cultural artifact of (il)legal status children of immigrants mediated to themselves and others their new identity production (Urrieta, 2007). The routine interactions that occur in the homes reflect and reproduce the larger social, economic, and political characteristics of society (Bourdieu, 1977). Children of immigrants born in the US are socialized as "American" by their environment and association with cultural institutions (Olsen, 1997). They become part of the hybrid figured world of home-Spanish-ethnic through the social process initiated by their parents. That is, immigrant parents (re)create an ethnic figured world in their US homes in which their children participate and become social actors. Children of immigrants are drawn into the figured world of undocumented immigrants that their parents and close relatives have organized for themselves. This participation into the figured world of undocumented immigrants depends on who the actors are and their personal social history (Urrieta et al., 2011). As such, US-born children of

immigrants participate in the imagined communities (Anderson, 1991) formed by undocumented immigrants. Children are too young at this stage to reject the undocumented identity being imposed upon them by means of their belonging to mixed-legal status families (Mangual-Figeroa, 2013). Positionalities are offered or imposed on people in different figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998; Urrieta, 2011). US-born children of immigrants are many times casted or positioned as "illegal children" by means of association to their undocumented parents.

In the next section I propose some recommendations based on my study with immigrant families of Mexican and Central American origins. Understanding the centrality of Spanish as native language, Latino culture and practices in immigrant households can help expand educators' knowledge about the learning practices of immigrant families and children of immigrants in our school.

Recommendation #1: Recognize that Spanish language is intrinsically linked to the ethnic identity of Latino children of immigrants

Language differentiation and use among children of immigrants is a relevant issue for schools. Instruction of bilingual students in the US varies by region, school district and even by school within the same school district. Administrators preoccupied with high stakes testing tend to rush bilingual students through the educational program so children can be incorporated sooner into mainstream classes. In recent years the propagation of dual language programs in the country has increased the time and subjects that are taught in Spanish, but this is not always true. These programs should be carefully planned to avoid using Latino children as linguistic vehicles with the sole purpose of benefiting the education of monolingual mainstream children. Successful and ethically sound dual

language programs should take into consideration the cultural background of the Latino children as well as the background of the mainstream students. Ideally, the cultural background and contributions of the communities represented should be studied and acknowledge.

Latino children are been raised bilingually in the US, even in households where Spanish is the predominant language. That is, children have been socialized at home in Spanish, and the community and their schooling enrich their education by incorporating English. In order for Latino students to continue their advancement in Spanish for familial connection (Wong-Fillmore, 1991) and academic growth, there must be a strong Spanish component in their schooling. Contrary to previous studies (Olsen, 1997; Bejarano, 2003) that indicate that immigrant students isolate themselves for lacking English skills and becoming English seekers relatively quickly, my findings suggest that children are comfortable with knowing both languages, even if their English is not very strong. Children in my study engaged in community activities (i.e., 4H, after school activities) for which English was required, and they did not shy away from those activities. The chart below shows specific recommendations for the instruction of Spanish and the development of vocabulary.

Recommendation	**Process**	**Resources**
Spanish language instruction and development	• Sound balanced literacy instructional program in Spanish language for PK-5th grades to include phonics, phonemic awareness, shared reading, guided reading, read aloud texts, independent reading, and writing o Phonemic awareness instruction through the use of poems and traditional songs o Phonics instruction using a syllabic approach that aligns with Spanish language o Guided reading instruction in Spanish, 5-3 times per week for students in K-3rd grade; and concurrent Guided reading in	• Late-exit language programs • Dual language programs • Culturally sound reading materials such as books from Santillana publishing company and National Geographic in Spanish • Syllable cards • Journals for writing • Lesson plan designs for about 60-90 minutes of

	English for students in 2nd-5th grade ○ Independent reading or sustained silent reading in Spanish using leveled readers, daily for a minimum of 30-40 min. ○ Interactive writing for incipient writers, daily during opening activities; whole group activity as well as one-to-one ○ Journal writing for more intermediate to advanced writers, daily	daily language arts instruction in Spanish • De Canciones a cuentos from Hampton Brown, poetry from Alma Flor Ada or similar resources that uses music, rhythm, and movement to develop phonemic awareness, and language and literacy development • Redaers' Theater approach
Academic Spanish development and acquisition of Tier 1 (basic), Tier 2 (school-related terms), and Tier 3 terms (specialized terms)	• Oral language development through picture scenes in which teacher engages the class in a conversation about the scene • Direct, targeted instruction of vocabulary for a minimum of 20-30 minutes daily • Inventive games and other activities such as word riddles • Grouping words in semantic groups • Study roots of words as a way to find the meaning of words with affixes • School-wide "Word of the Day" initiatives	• Non-fiction books in Spanish that address topics related to four content areas • Lesson plan designs • See Robert Marzano's research on building vocabulary and Isabel Beck work on teaching vocabulary

Table 11. Recommendations of Spanish Instruction

Recommendation #2: Design educational practices that will enhance and support ethnic culture and current immigration issues

Aside from a strong Spanish language component in schools and programs, there also needs to be a positive cultural component which portrays Latino culture and countries as emerging economic states. Teaching children about the richness and variety of ways of life in Latin America countries may help children of immigrants form stronger associations with their parents' countries of origin. When the only examples children have of their parents' countries of origin are scenarios of poverty and underprivileged communities, they do not get the full picture of reality. Children need to have positive, real examples of the diversity of scenarios from these countries. Like Erika, one of my mother participants, who clarified for her children that there is also poverty in the US, we

must share all the facts. Educational materials currently on the market geared towards bilingual students portray stereotypical situations and events of Latinos, such as going to the flea market, having a first communion, and making tamales. We need resources that offer varied and real examples of what it means to be Latino in the US. Let us not ignore iconic events that are relevant for some Latino communities, but let us also provide for children of all backgrounds other images that will allow them to enhance their knowledge about Latinos.

Similarly, curriculum should be infused with opportunities for all children to be exposed and discuss topics that are relevant to the school community and to the society. Immigration has been a topic of discussion in the US for quite some time. Allowing children to explore these themes in school, with the guidance of dedicated educators, has the potential to be a powerful teaching tool for all students, regardless of their background. Immigration has been part of the US since the inception of the nation. Yet, our history books mainly refer to the original wave of European immigrants to the country. By not including facts in our textbooks and lessons about more recent trends in immigrations, we are negating the existence of immigrants from other countries. Not talking about the factual causes of immigration (i.e, economic, war, persecution) in schools, perpetuates the general belief that all immigrants are undocumented, that they are taking the jobs of US-citizens, or that they have no state obligations (i.e, paying taxes). Children of immigrants in my study seemed well-versed in the area of immigration. Their knowledge is also valid and we should capitalize on that.

Recommendation	Process	Resources
Latino culture and traditions	• Study of relevant topics related to Latino culture, tradition and contemporary topics such as immigration through literature • Infuse the curriculum with culturally relevant resources through songs, poems, and stories	• *Cuentos que contaban nuestras abuelas/ Tales our Abuelitas Told*, by Isabel Campoy and Alma Flor Ada, collection of Hispanic Folktales • The works of Jose Luis Orozco highlight the heritage of Latino culture through songs and poetry • Lesson plan designs • Teacher professional development that addresses cultural relevant pedagogy
Contemporary topics	• Include and discuss contemporary relevant topics with older students such as migration, immigration to the US, recommended for 4th- 12th grades • Approach instruction through literature circles	• Recommended literature: Picture books- *Going Home* (E. Bunting), *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del otro lado* (G. Anzaldúa), *From North to South/ Del norte a sur* (Colato & Cepeda), Niño Wrestles the World Y. Morales), *How Many Days to America: A Thanksgiving Story* (E. Bunting), Waiting for Papa/ Esperando a Papá (Colato) Chapter books- *Senderos fronterizos: Breaking Through*, Spanish Edition (F. Jimenez), *Cajas de carton/ The Circuit: Stories From the Life of a Migrant Child* (F. Jimenez), *Devolver al remitente* (J. Alvarez), Me llamo Maria Isabel (Alma Flor Ada) • Student responses through quick notes, journal writing and/or drawing

Table 12. Recommendations for Educational Practices that Enhance Latino Culture

Recommendation #3: Approach contemporary social issues through multimodal techniques and literary circles

Students in our schools, regardless of their background and origin, will benefit from being aware of some social issues that affect our local society as well as the international society. For children of immigrants in particular, it is important that there is

a space where they can have the opportunity to share their knowledge, their opinions, and experiences. In this study, the use of multimodal techniques (van Leeuwen, 2000) in which a variety of data-collection tools is employed proved to be extremely useful. A multimodal method can bring out children's learning, experiences and meaning making through both pictures and words. Children are used to use literature as a vehicle to acquire information as well as to engage in discussion. Thus, literary circles like the ones I employed in this study can be a powerful strategy to provide a space to discuss social issues in classrooms. For the immigrant students in this study, having access to that space between the pictures offered by the pictures books we read (See Chapter IV for titles) gave them the opportunity to make meaning from text while discussing topics that are current and relevant for them and their families. The students were able to bring all of their available resources and knowledge to the table to engage in discussion and share with others. Our meetings served as an invitation for students to fill in the spaces with their questions and experiences. The format of the meeting encouraged involvement with others, which contributed to the social nature of the students' interpretations, albeit in different ways. Below I present some suggestions to assist educators in creating discussions and inquiry opportunity for their students to address social issues.

My approach with 10-year olds was using literature with migration themes to give the children the opportunity to share experiences and express their emotions. These literature meetings provided a space for children to talk about aspects of their private lives. Holland et al. (1998) assert that identity is a concept that figuratively combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations. Therefore, it is important that educators and institutions realize that children of

immigrants do need the physical space and time to recreate part of their figured world. Drawing pictures of relevant topics for the children also was a safe approach for children to share about their intimate selves.

Strategies for Discussing Social Issues through Literary Circles and Multimodal Techniques
▪ Select a picture book that addresses the topic to discuss. ▪ Read the story previously and identify parts that would be good point to stop and ask questions. Ideally, these stopping points address the social issue being discussed. ▪ Provide students with index cards or auto adhesive notes and writing tools to jot down ideas, make connections with the text, or write questions that come to their minds during the reading. Stduents will also need supplies for drawing. ▪ Use a small-group format similar to a guided reading approach, with four to six students. Not all students have to have similar backgrounds. ▪ Do a picture walk before starting the reading. Ask students to share their predictions based on the illustrations. ▪ Ask how they think the characters might be thinking or feeling. ▪ Read the book, pausing at key points in the story which address the social issue being discussed. ▪ Keep the conversation open. Invite students to share their thinking and pose their own questions. Some questions or prompts that can be used: -What do you think about this page? -What did you notice here? -What is happening here? ▪ Invite students to write down their impressions, questions, or connections with the argument of the story. ▪ At the end of the reading, answer any questions students may have. ▪ Ask for volunteers to share their notes, personal connections to the text and lead a discussion. ▪ End the activity by asking students to draw a picture. Students can draw their favorite part in the story or a part that reminded them of something. Ask students to write a couple of sentences describing their picture. ▪ Individually or in group, discuss with each student their picture and the meaning they make of it.

Table 13. Strategies for Discussing Social Issues through Literary Circles and Multimodal Techniques

Recommendation for Further Research #1: Extend and expand research on ethnic identity development among Latino children of immigrants

Ethnic identity takes a variety of forms and combinations. As this study has found, there is not one essential immigrant experience, even among a small group. Much of the diversity of experiences can be attributed to the different backgrounds of immigrants. Future studies which focus on specific aspects of the immigration experience may increase our understandings of specific immigrant sub-groups within the larger Latino immigrant population. These types of studies are significant because they pay reverence to the unique and complex experiences that different Latino immigrant groups undergo and, in this way, unveil the nuances and subtleties of their experiences. The data collection for this study is by no means complete or encompassing. Studies that incorporate a larger sample size along with an extensive period of data collection and/or longitudinal study may shed light on the changes children of immigrants undergo as they get older and have new experiences with other institutions. This study is important because as the Latino population continues to grow in the US, it becomes increasingly relevant to monitor and assess the diverse needs and the impact on the children of immigrants as it relates to issues of educational access and equity. It is also critical to know if children continue to self-identify as having two cultural identities related to their parents' home country and the US.

Recommendation for Further Research #2: Collaborate across disciplines to research the impact of Latino children of immigrants and immigrant mothers on society

Finally, interdisciplinary research studies in the areas of health, education, sociology, ethnic studies, public policy, anthropology, and beyond, are crucial to understanding the ways in which the identity of Latino children of immigrants adds a meaningful dimension to our current knowledge in these areas and the ways in which they intersect. Rather than studying identity in disciplinary enclaves, it would be mutually beneficial to collaborate across disciplines to deepen and enrich our knowledge about the identity of children of Latino immigrants in all its complexity. Children of immigrants are part of the fabric of this nation and are the constructors of the future of the US. Studies are also needed to research the impact of female immigration to the US. There are very few studies (Pearce et al., 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Villenas, 2001; Villenas & Moreno, 2001) that center on immigrant women. It is important to include immigrant women's impact and contributions to society as well as the place of gender in shaping immigration. Furthermore, we need studies that give us a contemporary view of immigration to the US. The classical view of men migrating before their wives and children of past decades (Henderson, 2011; Boehm, 2012) has changed as exemplified by this study.

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